

## **South West London (SWL) Quick Reference Guide for Prescribing Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) in Primary Care**

To be used in conjunction with full guideline '[The Identification, Treatment and Management of Malnutrition in Adults: Including the Appropriate Prescribing of Oral Nutritional Supplements](#)'

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### **Introduction**

These guidelines aim to improve the identification, treatment and management of malnutrition of patients in the community.

They are intended to provide information on current best practice, reduce unnecessary expenditure and to ensure a consistent approach by primary care clinicians across SWL in the management of malnutrition.

The guidelines are designed for use by GPs, medicines optimisation teams, dietitians, district nurses, practice nurses, pharmacists, care home staff and other community health care professionals.

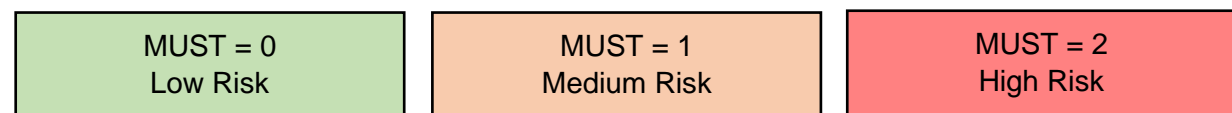
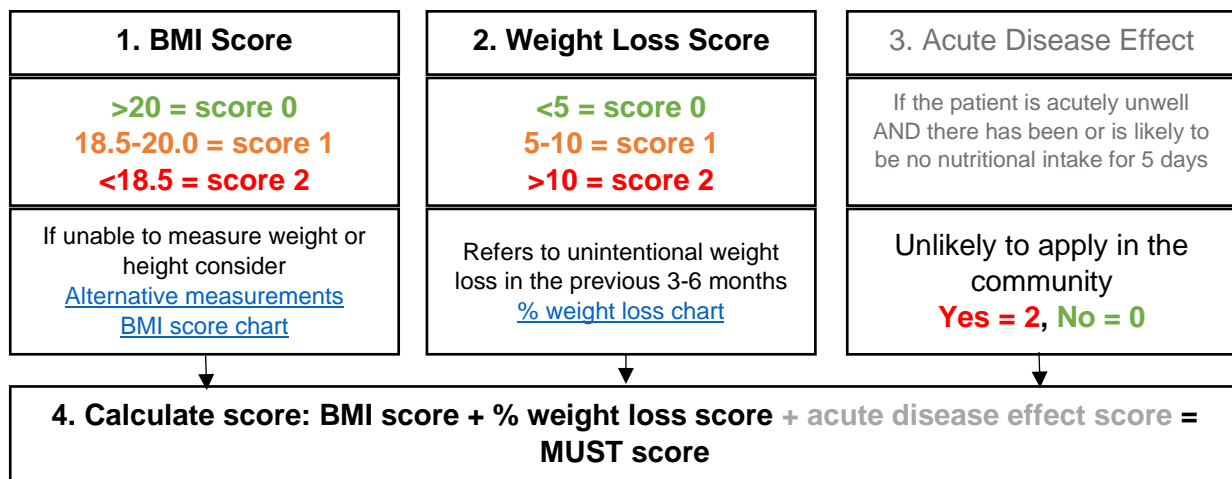
It is estimated that at least 3 million adults in the UK are affected by malnutrition at any one time. Malnutrition is directly associated with delayed recovery, increased complications and increased mortality. Adverse effects can include increased risk of infection, reduced muscle strength, reduced respiratory muscle function, impaired wound healing, increased risk of hospital admission and increased length of stay.

The estimated health costs associated with malnutrition exceed £19.6 billion annually and substantially impact on the health economy with increased demands on GP services, out of hours services and increase rates of transition across pathways of care.

ONS are commercially produced and available to prescribe on FP10 for the treatment of malnutrition in certain patients. £2.9 million was spent on ONS across SWL Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in the financial year 2020/21. However, London audit data suggests that 57-75% of these prescriptions may be inappropriate (based on ACBS prescribing criteria and dietetic clinical judgment).

## MUST Management Guidelines for Community Dwelling Patients

Online [MUST calculator](#)



**Does not meet criteria for ONS prescription**

Routine clinical care  
**Repeat screening annually**

**Action & Treat**

- [Food First Advice](#) and/or  
Over the Counter  
supplements for at least 1  
month  
- Increase both calorie and  
protein intake  
- Assess & support  
underlying cause of  
malnutrition

+ re-screen in maximum  
of 3-6 months

**Remains at medium risk**

Continue Food First Advice,  
reviewing and updating plan  
to meet patients' tastes and  
preferences.

**Does not meet criteria for  
ONS prescription**

**Action & Treat**

- Consider referral to local dietetic team  
- [Food First Advice](#) and/or Over the  
Counter supplements for at least 1  
month  
- Increase calorie and protein intake  
- Assess & support underlying cause of  
malnutrition

+ re-screen in 4 weeks (or maximum  
3-6 months)

**Remains at high risk**

**Consider ONS prescription if no  
improvement once all above steps  
are completed, & ACBS indication\*  
met.**

- Continue with Food First Advice  
- Prescribe powder ONS unless  
contraindicated  
- Acute 4-week prescription  
- Set realistic goals  
- Review goals in 4 weeks (or maximum  
3-6 months), if achieved STOP ONS  
- If concerns remain consider referral to  
local dietetic team

**\*\*Document all weights,  
BMI, MUST score, goals  
in patient record\*\***

\*ACBS indicators:

- Disease related malnutrition
- Short bowel syndrome
- Intractable malabsorption
- Pre-operative preparation of  
undernourished patients
- Following total gastrectomy
- Dysphagia
- Proven Inflammatory Bowel  
Disease
- Haemodialysis
- CAPD
- Bowel fistulas

Continue to SCREEN & IDENTIFY, ACTION & TREAT, MONITOR & REVIEW following the above pathway

## Flow Chart to aid GP / Primary Care initiation and review of ONS

COMMENCING ONS (following 4 Week Food First Trial)  
Pathway for patients not under dietetics

## a) MEETS ONS PRESCRIBING CRITERIA

1. High risk of malnutrition (MUST  $\geq 2$ )
2. ACBS indicated
3. [Food First Advice](#) trialled for 4 weeks
4. Assess and support regarding underlying cause of malnutrition

## b) INITIATE PRESCRIPTION

1. Trial ONS to establish tolerance & flavour preferences (prescribe starter pack)
2. Prescribe up to 2 flavours on ACUTE for 4 weeks only
3. See Product Guidance for list of preferred products and quantities to prescribe

## c) SET REALISTIC GOALS e.g:

- Prevent further weight loss
- Achieve weight gain with identified target weight
- Wound healing

## REVIEWING ONS

Pathway for patients not under dietetics

REVIEW IN 4 WEEKS (or maximum 3-6 months).  
Review weight, MUST score and goals of ONS intervention

## IMPROVEMENT

Weight stable or increasing /  
appetite improved / goals met

## NO IMPROVEMENT

- Reinforce Food First Advice
  - Identify and address underlying barriers
  - If ONS criteria is met; prescribe an acute 4 week prescription
- REVIEW IN 4 WEEKS (or maximum 3-6 months)

Prescribed  $\leq 2$  ONS daily  
Stop ONS prescription. Wean to half current dose to use up remaining supply, continue to monitor weight

Prescribed  $> 2$  ONS daily  
Reduce ONS to twice daily

Advise to continue [Food First Advice](#) and replace ONS with 1-2 extra nourishing snacks / drinks per day

## NO IMPROVEMENT

Consider referral / re-referral to local dietetic service if available

**Review in 4 weeks (or maximum 3-6 months) - MUST, weight, goals of ONS**

**Nil concerns:** ONS to be stopped / remain stopped

**Concerns present:** Follow pathway and reinforce Food First Advice

## Notes for Prescribing

Please see [full guideline](#) for guidance on prescribing ONS for specific patient groups:

- Dysphagia
- Palliative care
- Renal
- Diabetes
- Vitamin K / warfarin
- Substance misuse

### Starter packs / samples

- If patient meets prescribing criteria, initially provide a sample to establish tolerance and flavour preference.  
GP practices are encouraged to prescribe a starter pack or 1 week supply of ONS.  
Dietitians have the option to use direct to patient sample services via nutritional company websites.
- Starter packs of powdered ONS contain a shaker for patient use.
- Ensure any ongoing prescription is NOT a starter pack as these have a higher cost.

### Dosage

- The suggested dose for ONS is twice daily. Avoid prescriptions for ONS once daily, these provide 300-380kcal per day which can easily be achieved via Food First Advice.
- Choose a maximum of 2 flavours for ongoing prescription to reduce dispensing costs.
- If under dietetic review, the volume/quantity of ONS prescription will be identified on dietetic assessment.
- It is rarely necessary to prescribe more than two bottles of nutritionally complete supplements per day.  
Anyone who is reliant on ONS as a sole source of nutrition or achieves the majority of their nutritional intake from ONS should be under the care of a dietitian.

### Other

- To maximise their effectiveness, patients should be advised to take supplements between meals and not as a meal replacement.
- Patients should continue to implement Food First Advice alongside their ONS prescription.
- Ensure all anthropometry such as weights, height, BMI and MUST score, and patient goals are documented in the patient record to aid reviews.

## ONS Prescribing Criteria

ONS Prescribing Criteria	*ACBS indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High risk of malnutrition i.e. <a href="#">MUST</a> score greater than 2</li> <li>ACBS indicated*</li> <li>Food based methods trialled for one month including over the counter supplements</li> <li>Assess and support regarding underlying causes of malnutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disease related malnutrition</li> <li>Short bowel syndrome</li> <li>Intractable malabsorption</li> <li>Pre-op preparation of undernourished patients</li> <li>Following total gastrectomy</li> <li>Dysphagia</li> <li>Proven Inflammatory Bowel Disease</li> <li>Haemodialysis or Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD)</li> <li>Bowel fistulas</li> </ul>

## Food First Advice

### 1<sup>st</sup> line treatment = Food First Advice

Should be trialled for at least 1 month prior to considering prescription of ONS

- Provide [Food First resources](#)
- Eat little and often, aiming to have 3 small meals per day plus 2-3 snacks in between
- Fortify meals with high calorie / high protein ingredients e.g. double cream, butter, cheese, peanut butter, olive oil, skimmed milk powder. For example:
  - Make porridge with full fat milk and add skimmed milk powder and peanut butter
  - Drizzle olive oil over salads and vegetables
  - Add cheese to savoury dishes such as pasta, omelettes, jacket potato
  - Make sandwiches with extra butter and mayonnaise
  - Add double cream or ice cream to chopped fruit
- Choose full fat / sugar products where possible. For example:
  - Full fat (whole) milk
  - Double cream
  - Full fat, thick & creamy yogurt
- Include Nourishing drinks e.g. milky coffee, hot chocolate, milkshakes, fruit smoothies.
- Avoid 'diet' or 'light' versions of products such as custard, yogurts, rice pudding.
- Advice should be tailored to patients' religion, culture and beliefs
- Over the counter supplements can be considered e.g. Complan<sup>®</sup>, Nurishment<sup>®</sup>, Meritene<sup>®</sup> which can be bought from local pharmacies and larger supermarkets.

## ONS Product Guidance

**2<sup>nd</sup> line treatment = Prescription of Powdered ONS***Powdered ONS is the preferred choice unless contraindicated.*

## Contraindications:

- Limited dexterity & inability to prepare
- Cow's milk allergy or intolerance
- Under 6 years
- Galactosaemia
- Not suitable for enteral feeding tubes
- Patients with renal disease should be assessed by a dietitian prior to prescribing a powdered ONS

Product Name	Price per Unit	Nutrition Per Serving	Flavours	Pack Size	IDDSI Level*	Volume to prescribe for 28 day supply
Preferred powder ONS:						
<b>Foodlink Complete Powder</b> to be mixed with 200ml whole milk	<b>£0.49</b>	<b>383kcal, 19g protein</b>	<b>Banana, Chocolate, Natural, Strawberry, Vanilla</b>	<b>399g (7 x 57g sachets)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>57g twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 3,192g No. of packs: 8 x 399g</b>
Alternative option:						
<i>Aymes Shake to be mixed with 200ml whole milk</i>	<i>£0.49</i>	<i>383kcal, 19g protein</i>	<i>Banana, Chocolate, Ginger, Natural, Vanilla</i>	<i>399g (7 x 57g sachets)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>57g twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 3,192g No. of packs: 8 x 399g</i>
Compact option for patients who require a smaller volume:						
<b>Foodlink Complete Compact Powder</b> to be mixed with 100ml whole milk	<b>£0.49</b>	<b>318kcal, 15g protein</b>	<b>Banana, Chocolate, Natural, Strawberry, Vanilla</b>	<b>399g (7 x 57g sachets)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>57g twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 3,192g No. of packs: 8 x 399g</b>
Alternative option:						
<i>Aymes Shake Compact to be mixed with 100ml whole milk</i>	<i>£0.49</i>	<i>318kcal, 15g protein</i>	<i>Banana, Chocolate, Ginger, Natural, Vanilla</i>	<i>399g (7 x 57g)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>57g twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 3,192g No. of packs: 8 x 399g</i>
'Juice' based option for patients who cannot tolerate or dislike milk:						
<b>Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie</b> to be mixed with 150ml water	<b>£1.00</b>	<b>297kcal, 10.7g protein</b>	<b>Mango, Peach, Pineapple &amp; Strawberry, Cranberry</b>	<b>462g (7 x 66g sachets)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>66g twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 3,696g No. of packs: 8 x 462g</b>

**3<sup>rd</sup> line treatment = Prescription of Ready to Drink ONS***To be prescribed only if powdered ONS is contraindicated or not tolerated*

Product Name	Price per unit	Nutrition per serving	Flavours	Pack Size	IDDSI Level*	Volume to prescribe for 28 day supply
Preferred ready to drink ONS:						
<b>Altraplen Energy</b>	<b>£0.89</b>	<b>300kcal, 12g protein</b>	<b>Banana, Chocolate, Strawberry, Vanilla</b>	<b>800ml (4 x 200ml)</b>	<b>0-1</b>	<b>200ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 11,200ml 56 bottles</b>
<i>Alternative options:</i>						
<i>Aymes Complete</i>	<i>£1.05</i>	<i>300kcal, 12g protein</i>	<i>Banana, Chocolate, Strawberry, Vanilla</i>	<i>800ml (4 x 200ml)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>200ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 11,200ml 56 bottles</i>
<i>Fortisip Bottle</i>	<i>£1.12</i>	<i>300kcal, 12g protein</i>	<i>Vanilla, Tropical Fruit, Banana, Strawberry, Chocolate, Neutral</i>	<i>800ml (4 x 200ml)</i>	<i>NK</i>	<i>200ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 11,200ml 56 bottles</i>
Compact option for patients who require a smaller volume:						
<b>Fortisip Compact</b>	<b>£1.33</b>	<b>300kcal, 12g protein</b>	<b>Apricot, Banana, Chocolate, Forest Fruits, Mocha, Neutral, Strawberry, Vanilla</b>	<b>500ml (4 x 125ml)</b>	<b>NK</b>	<b>125ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 7,000ml No. of packs: 14 x 500ml</b>
<i>Alternative options:</i>						
<i>Altraplen Compact</i>	<i>£1.33</i>	<i>300kcal, 12g protein</i>	<i>Banana, Chocolate, Strawberry, Vanilla</i>	<i>500ml (4 x 125ml)</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>125ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 7,000ml No. of packs: 14 x 500ml</i>
'Juice' based option for patients who cannot tolerate / dislike milk. Should not routinely be prescribed for patients with diabetes.						
<b>Altrajuce</b>	<b>£1.70</b>	<b>300kcal, 8g protein</b>	<b>Apple, Blackcurrant, Orange, Strawberry</b>	<b>200ml bottle</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>200ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 11,200ml 56 bottles</b>
<i>Alternative option:</i>						
<i>Aymes ActaGain Juce</i>	<i>£1.70</i>	<i>300kcal, 11g protein</i>	<i>Apple, Orange</i>	<i>200ml</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>200ml twice daily for 28 days Total volume: 11,200ml 56 bottles</i>



**Oral Nutritional Supplements not to be routinely prescribed in primary care**

Items on this list may be recommended to be prescribed following dietitian assessment only.

Prescription requests must include:

- Clear clinical justification for the product choice
- Length of prescription
- Goal / aim of ONS treatment
- Review Plan

Please choose the most cost effective product within each category where possible.

Product Name	Price per unit	Calories per serving (kcal)	Protein per serving (g)	Unit Size	Pack Size	IDDSI Level*
<b>Powdered ONS:</b>						
Complan Shake	£0.49	380	15.5	57g	399g	NK
Ensure Shake	£0.51	389	17.0	57g	399g	0
Aymes ActaSolve High Energy	£1.96	593	12.5	85g	510g	0
Enshake	£2.66	600	16.0	96.5	579g	0
Calshake	£2.63	600	12.0	87g	609g	NK
Scandishake	£2.66	585	12.5	85g	510g	NK
<b>Milkshake Style:</b>						
Ensure Plus Milkshake	£1.12	300	12.5	200ml	800ml	0
Fresubin Energy	£1.40	300	11.2	200ml	800ml	0
Aymes 2.0kcal	£1.63	400	16.0	200ml	800ml	2
Fortisip 2kcal	£2.22	400	20.0	200ml	800ml	NK
Ensure TwoCal	£2.33	399	16.8	200ml	800ml	1
<b>Compact Style:</b>						
Ensure Compact	£1.40	300	12.0	125ml	500ml	1
<b>Juice Style:</b>						
Ensure Plus Juice	£2.00	330	10.6	220ml	880ml	1
Fresubin Jucy	£2.01	300	8.0	200ml	800ml	0
Fortijuice	£2.02	300	7.8	200ml	800ml	0
<b>'Once a day' ONS:</b>						
Aymes ActaGain 600	£1.60	600	24.0	250ml	250ml	2
Altraplen Compact Daily	£1.60	600	24.0	250ml	1000ml	2
<b>High protein:</b>						
Aymes ActaSolve Protein Compact	£0.95	312	20.2	57g	399g	2/3
Aymes ActaGain 2.4 Complete Maxi	£1.33	400	19.2	200ml	800ml	2
Altraplen Protein	£1.83	300	20.0	200ml	800ml	1
Fortisip Compact Protein	£2.05	300	18.0	125ml	500ml	NK
Ensure Plus Advance	£2.31	330	20.0	220ml	880ml	1
Fortisip Extra	£2.52	318	19.6	200ml	800ml	1
<b>Fibre containing:</b>						
Aymes Shake Fibre	£0.71	374 (+5g fibre)	19.0	57g	399g	0
Foodlink Complete with Fibre	£0.76	397 (+4.5g fibre)	19.0	63g	441g	1
Resource 2.0 Fibre	£2.08	400 (+5g fibre)	18.0	200ml	800g	NK
Fortisip Compact Fibre	£2.20	300 (+4.5g fibre)	11.8	125ml	500ml	NK
Ensure Plus Fibre	£2.23	310 (+5g fibre)	13.0	200ml	800ml	1
<b>Savoury Style:</b>						
Aymes ActaSolve Savoury	£0.71	250	9.2	57g	399g	1
<b>Yogurt Style:</b>						
Ensure Plus Yogurt	£1.16	300	12.5	200ml	200ml	0
Fortisip Yogurt	£2.33	300	11.8	200ml	200ml	2



Product Name	Price per unit	Calories per serving (kcal)	Protein per serving (g)	Unit Size	Pack Size	IDDSI Level*
<b>Pre-Thickened ONS for patients with dysphagia:</b>						
Slo Milkshake IDDSI Level 1	£0.95	401	27.6	50g	350g	1
Slo Milkshake IDDSI Level 2	£0.85	333	24.2	50g	350g	2
Slo Milkshake IDDSI Level 3	£0.85	333	24.2	50g	350g	3
Slo Milkshake IDDSI Level 4	£0.95	265	20.8	50g	350g	4
Nutrilis Complete Drink level 3	£2.32	306	12.0	125ml	500ml	3
Nutrilis Complete Crème Level 3	£2.32	306	12.0	125g	500g	3
Fresubin thickened Level 2 / 3	£2.35	300	20.0	200ml	800ml	2 / 3
<b>Puddings / desserts:</b>						
Aymes ActaSolve Delight	£0.99	302	11.2	57g	399g	4
Nutricrem	£1.83	225	12.5	125g	500g	4
Aymes ActaCal Creme	£1.19	188	9.4	125g	500g	4
Forticreme Complete	£2.06	200	11.9	125g	500g	NK
Nutrilis Fruit Level 4	£2.58	206	10.5	150g	600g	4
<b>Modular ONS:</b>						
Altrashot	£2.17	420	6.0	120ml	480ml	2
Calogen <a href="#">See position statement</a>	£5.04 / £12.41	419 (3 x 30ml servings)	0	200ml / 500ml	200ml / 500ml	NK
Calogen Extra	£5.10	480 (3 x 40ml servings)	6.0	200ml	200ml	NK
ProSource Liquid	£1.12	100	10.0	30ml	100 x 30ml	NK
ProSource TF	£1.36	44	11.0	45ml	100 x 45ml	0
ProSource Plus	£1.59	100	15.0	30ml	50 or 100 x 30ml	NK
ProSource Jelly	£2.07	90	20.0	118ml	36 x 118ml	4
<b>Specialist ONS:</b>						
Vital 1.5	£3.43	300	13.5	200ml	800ml	0
Modulen IBD	£16.19	2000	70	400g	12 x 400g	NK
Elemental 028 Extra Powder	£8.20	443	12.5	100g	10 x 100g	NK

This list is not exhaustive. Please contact your CCG Prescribing Support Dietitian or Medicines Optimisation Team with any queries.

\*International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) levels are reported by manufacturers.  
NK = Not Known.

For details on how IDDSI flow testing was completed please see manufacturers' websites.

Adding thickener to powdered or ready to drink ONS can be problematic; therefore it is advised to choose a pre-thickened ONS or a product which is 'naturally' the correct IDDSI level. Always follow advice from a SLT / Dietitian.

Prices taken from MIMS, March 2022.

## Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) Allergens & Cultural Diet Information

Product Name		Suitable for:				Contains:			
		Vegan	Vegetarian	Halal	Kosher	Nut	Soya	Gluten	Lactose
<b>Powder ONS</b>	Foodlink Complete Powder (including Compact Powder)	X	✓	✓ [3]	✓ [4]	X	✓	X	✓
	Aymes Shake Powder (including Compact Powder)	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓
	Aymes ActaSolve Smoothie	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X
<b>Ready to Drink ONS</b>	Altraplen Energy	X	✓ [1]	✓ [3]	✓ [4]	X	✓	X	X
	Aymes Complete	X	✓ [1]	✓ [3,5]	✓ [5]	X	X	X	X
	Fortisip Bottle	X	✓ [1]	✓	✓ [5]	X	✓	X	X
	Fortisip Compact	X	✓ [1]	✓	✓ [5]	X	✓	X	✓
	Altraplen Compact	X	✓ [1]	✓ [3,5]	✓ [4,5]	X	✓	X	X
	Ensure Compact	X	✓ [1]	✓	✓ [2]	X	✓	X	✓
	Altrajuce	X	✓ [1]	✓ [3,5]	✓ [4,5]	X	✓	X	X

[1] Strawberry flavour contains Cochineal / Carmine (E120) which may not be acceptable to some vegetarians. Also present in the following flavours:

Fortisip Compact – Forest Fruits, Apricot

Fortisip Bottle – Tropical

[2] Some flavours not suitable, please see manufacturer's website for details

[3] Does not have Halal certification. However, does not contain any products forbidden in the Halal diet

[4] Does not have Kosher certification. However, does not contain any products forbidden in the Kosher diet

[5] Except the flavours which contain Cochineal / Carmine (E120)