



# *FAQs about Therapeutic Nutrition for Managing a Specific Disease or Condition*

## **Therapeutic Nutrition for Digestive Problems**

Most of us know that eating healthy foods is important for a healthy life. But for people with certain health problems, proper nutrition is more than just a good idea. Today, experts know that nutrition is an essential part of managing many health problems, including digestive problems like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and constipation.

Therapeutic nutrition — or the use of specific nutrients and food products in the right quantity to help manage a health problem — is a good way for you to take care of your own health or the health of a loved one. Therapeutic nutrition cannot prevent health problems, but it may help reduce medical care and complications and hospital stay.

Therapeutic nutrition works by making sure that your body gets the balanced mix of the nutrients it needs to fight an ongoing health problem. Your doctor or registered dietitian may recommend using it by itself or along with other medical care.

### **Q: I have a digestive problem (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation or loss of appetite). How can therapeutic nutrition help me?**

**A:** Sometimes medical treatments, therapies, and medications can cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhea, constipation, dehydration and other digestive problems. These conditions can make it difficult to eat enough food and get adequate hydration for people to meet their needs. Their bodies may burn muscle and fat for energy. When people lose weight and have poor nutrition, their bodies cannot handle their treatment as well.

Some therapeutic nutrition products are helpful for people with digestive problems. For example, Ensure® and Ensure Plus® can provide calories and protein to patients who need to regain and keep up their weight. For people who have had taste changes because of treatment, need a clear liquid diet, or must limit fat intake, Ensure® Clear™ provides an alternative source of calories, protein, and other needed nutrients and is low in fat. Because many elders have milk intolerance, soy based nutrition supplements should be considered. Talk to your doctor or registered dietitian to find out which therapeutic nutrition product is right for you or your loved one.

### **Q: I already eat a healthy diet. What can therapeutic nutrition do for me?**

**A:** Everyone should try to eat a balanced diet to help maintain good overall health, even if you do not have a chronic health problem. However, therapeutic nutrition is different from simply choosing healthy foods for yourself and your family. It provides important nutrients that can help you manage diabetes. You may use therapeutic nutrition in addition to regular meals or choose to occasionally replace some foods with these products.

Some people use therapeutic nutrition products to help them heal faster, stay stronger in the face of illness, and respond better to medical care, such as chemotherapy and surgery. Talk to your health care professional to make sure that therapeutic nutrition is right for you.

### **Q: Do therapeutic nutrition products affect other medical treatments?**

**A:** You and your doctor must decide the best treatment plan for you or your loved one's health condition. This may include medicine, surgery, therapeutic nutrition, and other treatments. Therapeutic nutri-



tion may help improve how well your other medical treatments work. Your doctor or registered dietitian can help design a therapeutic nutrition plan that works with you or your loved one's treatment plan.

**Q: I am not usually hungry, do not like many foods, and have food allergies. How do I know that I can use therapeutic nutrition products?**

**A:** Many different kinds of therapeutic nutrition products are available. You and your health care professional can decide on the best way for you to include your specific nutritional needs and therapeutic nutrition in your treatment plan. You can choose from a variety of products to fit your current medical treatment and in the flavors that you like.

**Q: I am helping a loved one who has nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhea, or constipation, but I am not available to help at every meal. What can I do to make sure he is eating right?**

**A:** Taking care of loved ones with ongoing health problems sometimes is difficult, but good nutrition is an area in which you can take charge. Therapeutic nutrition products can supplement meals with necessary nutrition when loved ones cannot or do not want to eat certain foods. No matter how you and your loved ones choose to use therapeutic nutrition, it can help provide the nutrients that are needed. And it can help you both feel more confident by providing a diet that is more nutritious and complete.

**Q: How can I get more information or advice about therapeutic nutrition?**

**A:** Always start by talking to your health care professional. Your doctor may refer you to a registered dietitian (RD), who will review your medical information, help you create a special diet, and show you how to use therapeutic nutrition products to meet your or your loved one's specific needs. You can find an RD in your area by visiting the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics online at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and clicking on "Find a Nutrition Professional" or look in your phone book under "Registered Dietitians."

Some insurance companies may cover the counseling an RD provides when recommended by your doctor. Contact your doctor's office to see if an RD is on staff.

**Q: Will my health plan cover nutrition services and therapeutic nutrition products?**

**A:** Some health plans may consider coverage for all or part of nutrition services provided by an RD. In some cases, health plans may cover therapeutic nutrition products. Most often, coverage exists when the product is recommended by a doctor and serving as the only source of nutrition. Each health plan is different. Abbott Nutrition's PATHWAY Reimbursement HelpLine is a resource to help you understand insurance benefits, available product coverage options and potential eligibility. Call the PATHWAY Reimbursement HelpLine at 800-558-7677, Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM - 5 PM, EST, to learn more.

**Q: Can I use my Health Savings Account (HSA) to buy therapeutic nutritional products?**

**A:** You or your loved one may qualify to use tax-free dollars through your HSA to purchase some therapeutic nutrition products. To qualify, your health care professional must recommend the product for a specific medical condition. Certain products also may qualify for purchase under your Flexible Spending Account (FSA). Contact your FSA plan administrator for specific coverage information.

**Q: Where can I purchase therapeutic nutrition products?**

**A:** Many of these products are available to purchase online for home delivery. You also can find many therapeutic nutrition products at your local food or drugstore or ask your pharmacy to order them for you. Speak to your doctor or registered dietitian to learn which products are best for you.

To learn more about therapeutic nutrition products for specific health problems and for a store locator, visit [www.AbbottNutrition.com](http://www.AbbottNutrition.com) or call 1-800-227-5767 Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM EST. You also can chat live with a registered dietitian online at <http://ensure.com/ask-a-nutritionist>.

