



Understanding the risk of malnutrition as you age

One in 10 people who are aged over 65 are malnourished or at risk of becoming malnourished.¹ For those in later life, malnutrition can have complex health repercussions and can seriously affect health and wellbeing. It can lead to a weaker immune system, increased risk of infections, poor wound healing, and muscle weakness, which can result in falls and fractures. Being undernourished can also have a negative impact on someone's quality of life due to low energy levels, dizziness and generally feeling under the weather.²

Malnutrition is not an inevitable part of ageing, but unfortunately many of the common causes of malnutrition (such as illness, loneliness, and loss of mobility) can affect older people more frequently.³

It is important to be on the lookout for the signs of malnutrition. The most common symptoms are a loss of appetite and unplanned weight loss. The signs and symptoms of malnutrition can be hard to recognise and so the condition often goes unnoticed. Keep an eye out for whether your clothes, rings, jewellery and dentures feel loose as these are often small signs of weight loss that might be missed.

If you are worried about unplanned weight loss there is a quick self-screening tool that you can use online if you have access to the internet or know somebody that can help you access the internet. It takes just five minutes and will help you establish whether you are at risk of becoming malnourished. Find out more at www.malnutritionselfscreening.org.

Remember, if you are worried about unplanned weight loss you should speak to your GP or a healthcare professional. For information about malnutrition, visit www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk

References

1. Russell, C.A. and Elia, M. for BAPEN and collaborators. (2014) Nutrition Screening Surveys in Hospitals in the UK, 2007–2011, A report based on the amalgamated data from the four Nutrition Screening Week surveys undertaken by BAPEN in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011.

2. Malnutrition Task Force. State of the nation: Older people and malnutrition in the UK today. 2017.
3. Malnutrition Task Force. A review and summary of the impact of malnutrition in older people and the reported costs and benefits of interventions 2013.



Malnutrition Task Force
Eating and drinking well in later life