



JOINT MISSION STATEMENT

UK MALNUTRITION AWARENESS WEEK

Ask, Look, Listen. We're ALL in this together.

6th – 12th
NOVEMBER
2023

UK Malnutrition Awareness Week was founded by the Malnutrition Task Force and BAPEN in 2018 to raise awareness of undernutrition and dehydration in the UK. The campaign seeks to increase understanding of the dangers, risk factors and signs of malnutrition and dehydration amongst health and social care workers, community groups, the public, parliamentarians and policy makers. Following the success of last year, our focus for 2023 is once again on encouraging everybody to work together to improve understanding, identification, prevention and management of malnutrition and dehydration.

The challenge

More than three million people across the UK are either malnourished or at risk of becoming malnourished, with an estimated one million of these people over the age of 65.¹

Since the coronavirus outbreak and with the current cost-of-living crisis, we believe more people to be at risk of malnutrition. The aftermath of lockdowns has led to people being more isolated, and the cost-of-living crisis has meant that many people are feeling extremely worried about how to manage household finances, everything from heating to eating. High price rises in food and energy are forcing people to make tough decisions which may lead to people skipping meals, increasing the risk of vulnerability to malnutrition.

Malnutrition is both a cause and consequence of ill health and is often a hidden problem that goes unnoticed.

Malnutrition can have a devastating effect on physical health and emotional wellbeing and can often lead to or exacerbate long-term health problems. Yet sadly many of us are not familiar with the signs, symptoms and risk factors that would help us recognise that a loved one or somebody in our community is at risk of suffering from the condition.

Our vision

We envisage a future for the UK where preventing and managing malnutrition is everybody's business. This means that we want:

- Members of the public to understand the risks, causes, and signs of malnutrition, and know where to access resources and self-screening tools.
- Health and social care professionals to be able to spot the signs and symptoms of malnutrition and routinely screen for malnutrition.
- Policy makers to be engaged in helping to raise the profile of malnutrition (and dehydration) as a public health issue.

Ask, Look, Listen

This year we have a simple request - for everybody to Ask, Look and Listen and recognise that we are ALL in this together.

- **Ask** If you know somebody who may be vulnerable because they are older, because they have health problems, or perhaps because they are isolated, don't be afraid to ask them if they are eating and drinking okay. Don't be afraid to ask about somebody's appetite or ability to prepare food and drink, it could make all the difference and help you stop malnutrition in its tracks.
- **Look** Always be on the lookout for telltale signs of unplanned weight loss such as looser clothing, loose belts or rings or dentures. And remember you won't always see weight loss so keep your eyes open for other signs like empty fridges and cupboards.
- **Listen** carefully to what somebody is telling you about their life. It may not be about eating and drinking directly, but is it about feeling lonely, or losing interest in things that usually give them pleasure? Practice active listening and think about how the way somebody is feeling generally may affect how they are able to look after themselves.

¹ BAPEN, Introduction to Malnutrition, Available at <https://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition-undernutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition?showall=&start=4>.

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**Malnutrition Task Force**

Eating and drinking well in later life

The Malnutrition Task Force are united to combat preventable and avoidable malnutrition and dehydration among older people in the UK. Established in 2012, we believe that good nutrition and hydration is vital to enabling older people to live fulfilling and independent lives.

We seek to raise awareness of undernutrition in later life its causes, and provide information and guidance, work with partners across sectors and settings to improve the working lives of older people in the UK.

For more information visit:

<https://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/uk-malnutrition-awareness-week-2023>



“Preventable malnutrition presents a considerable health challenge in the UK, particularly in the older population. As UK Malnutrition Awareness Week enters its sixth year, it is more important than ever that we use the campaign platform to amplify important information and resources about risks and signs of malnutrition.

Losing weight is not an inevitable part of ageing, and that is why we're calling on the British public to 'Ask, Look, and Listen' for signs of malnutrition in vulnerable people in the community. I encourage you to register for MTF's Learning Day, an opportunity to hear an update on how older people are coping in today's environment, and also share learnings with one another.

In partnership with BAPEN, we're proud to offer practical guidance and resources to help support people looking out for those who may be at risk, while also raising awareness more generally. We are stronger together when we all play a part, so please do get involved with this important campaign however you can.”

Dianne Jeffrey CBE DL, Chair, Malnutrition Task Force

**BAPEN**

“Results from the BAPEN Malnutrition and Nutritional Care survey reveal that nearly half (45%) of all adults screened across health and care settings in the UK were found to be at risk of disease-related malnutrition. When assessing prevalence by setting, the findings indicate malnutrition risk is highest in those in their own homes (56% at risk), in residents in care homes (55% at risk), and in hospitals (44% at risk). These concerning findings evidence the importance of the UK Malnutrition Awareness Week campaign.

We are delighted to be joining forces with the Malnutrition Task Force for the sixth year running, to raise awareness of the signs, risk factors and dangers of malnutrition and dehydration. BAPEN's particular focus is around disease-related malnutrition, and providing support for people working in health and social care settings to better identify and manage malnutrition risk. An important message for us is that malnutrition risk is relevant to everyone, and requires multi-disciplinary teams to be working together to spot risks earlier.

I encourage you to get involved with #UKMAW2023, and a great way to do that is through the Malnutrition and Nutritional Care Screening Survey which runs throughout November, which allows us to take the temperature on malnutrition at a national level. Through combined efforts like these, we can help reduce the impact and burden of malnutrition in the UK and share best practice.”

Dr Trevor Smith, BAPEN President

BAPEN is a charity that works tirelessly to raise awareness of malnutrition in the UK. The organisation was founded in 1992 to bring together dietitians, doctors, nurses, patients and pharmacists into an integrated and effective organisation dedicated to improving nutritional care. Our aim is to advance the nutritional care of patients in health and care settings and those at risk of malnutrition within the wider community.

For more information visit:

<https://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition-undernutrition/combating-malnutrition/uk-malnutrition-awareness-week>

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#UKMAW2023