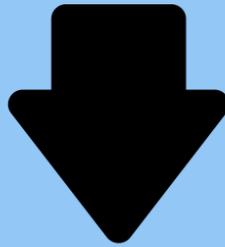


Nutrition essentials

Malnutrition is a common health problem. There are an estimated 3 million malnourished people in the UK at any time, with many more at risk of becoming malnourished. Over 1 million are over the age of 65 (Age UK, 2016).



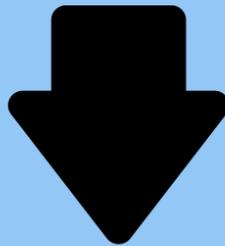
Signs and effects of malnutrition may include:

- unplanned or unexplained weight loss
- feeling tired, lacking energy
- an increased risk of illnesses or infections
- poor concentration
- difficulty keeping warm
- low mood/depression
- having a BMI under 18.5
- reduced/weaker muscle and tissue mass
- risk of pressure ulcer development and delayed wound healing
- decreased mobility and stamina
- increased respiratory difficulties
- poor libido (sex drive) and fertility problems
- increased chance in developing post-operative complications

What can nurses do if they suspect or detect malnutrition?

Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool: 'MUST' is a five-step tool that can be used by health professionals in hospitals, or in the community, to accurately identify those who are at risk from malnutrition.

Nurses can protect patients against illness and disease and enhance their quality of life. They can:



- listen to patients, their relatives and carers
- understand how ageing affects nutritional needs
- understand how illness and medication affect appetite and nutritional needs
- become food aware, meals are just as important as medication
- assess patients for signs or risk of malnourishment on admission to hospital and at regular intervals during their hospital stay
- assess skin integrity on admission and at regular intervals
- make sure that patients seen in GP surgeries are reviewed regularly
- plan care to treat malnutrition
- provide an appropriate diet for the age of the patient
- make sure mealtimes are protected in hospitals
- use trained volunteers or family and friends to provide help and support at mealtimes

NICE has produced guidance to help health professionals identify those who are malnourished, or at risk of malnutrition

BAPEN e-Learning Portal: A range of free e-Learning modules with case studies covering malnutrition, nutrition support and nutritional screening using 'MUST'.