

## Malnutrition Defined

Presence of at least 2 of 6 clinical characteristics:\*

- Insufficient food intake compared with nutrition requirements.
- Weight loss over time.
- Loss of muscle mass.
- Loss of fat mass.
- Fluid accumulation.
- Measurable diminished grip strength.

Often associated with general physical wasting.

- Usually linked to chronic disease.

Individuals with malnutrition may be underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese.

## The Social-Ecological Model

A theory-based framework for understanding interactive effects of personal and environmental factors that determine health behaviors.

Helps identify social and organizational leverage points for health promotion within organizations.



# The Challenge of Malnutrition in Older Adults: Approaching the Problem with a Social-Ecological Model

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## Level 3: Organizational

Establish systematic malnutrition screening and intervention models and standards

### Opportunities

- Integrate malnutrition screening and intervention into electronic health record templates visible to all healthcare professionals.
- Define clinicians' roles to include malnutrition screening and intervention.
- Use nutrition support teams for comprehensive, coordinated malnutrition care.
- Include malnutrition counseling in patient discharge plans, as appropriate.

### Resources

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services:
  - ◊ Mild and moderate malnutrition upgraded to a complication condition and potentially eligible for higher reimbursement.
  - ◊ Registered dietitian nutritionists have become privileged in hospitals to independently order patients' diets.
- Alliance to Advance Patient Nutrition: multidisciplinary effort to fight malnutrition; resources include online toolkit and easy to use Malnutrition Screening Tool.
- Abbott Nutrition Health Institute: CME credits on malnutrition and aging population.

## Level 4: Community

Engage independent organizations, local jurisdictions, and states

### Opportunities

- Incorporate malnutrition screening and intervention in state healthcare quality initiatives and care models, especially those related to healthcare-acquired conditions and readmissions.
- Implement a malnutrition-related quality measure set in public and private accountability programs, including Value-Based Purchasing, Medicare Shared Savings, Medicare Advantage, and states' quality programs for acute and post-acute care.
- Develop a malnutrition care seal-of-approval program for healthcare systems.
- Include malnutrition screening and intervention in hospital licensure requirements and hospital rating and comparison measures.
- Expand The Joint Commission standard on malnutrition screening to include malnutrition intervention.

### Resources

- Resolutions on malnutrition introduced by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and in the states of Indiana, Illinois, Louisiana, and Ohio that can serve as models for other states.
- Malnutrition Awareness Week resolutions introduced in the states of Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.
- Malnutrition Quality Improvement Initiative dialogue event held in 2014 by Avalere Health and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- Additional resources include The Joint Commission and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

## Level 5: Policy

Make malnutrition screening and intervention a policy priority

### Opportunities

- Federal and state health goals:
  - ◊ Add malnutrition identification, prevention, and intervention into the Healthy People 2020 goal for nutrition and weight status.
  - ◊ Address malnutrition and sarcopenic obesity in state and national obesity plans.
  - ◊ Reexamine the protein requirements for older adults.
- Affordable Care Act:
  - ◊ Emphasize malnutrition screening and intervention in care transitions grants and other relevant grants.
  - ◊ Make future grants contingent on inclusion of malnutrition screening and intervention in care delivery models, such as the Coleman Care Transitions Intervention model.
- Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization:
  - ◊ Strengthen links between nutrition and health.
  - ◊ Make malnutrition screening and intervention an element of nutrition education.

## Level 2: Interpersonal

Build routine nutrition screening and malnutrition intervention skills into healthcare professionals' training, education, and practice

### Opportunities

- Incorporate routine nutrition screening and intervention in standards of care for older adults.
- Establish malnutrition as a key health indicator and vital sign for older adults.
- Enhance training and continuing education regarding assessment on nutritional status and interventions for malnutrition:
  - ◊ Establish competencies in nutrition education for healthcare professionals.
  - ◊ Increase nutrition content in professional licensing and certification exams.
  - ◊ Foster training to improve interactions between healthcare providers and older patients.
- Support reimbursement for preventive health services targeting nutrition and physical activity.

### Resources

- *Talking With Your Older Patient: A Clinician's Handbook* from the National Institute on Aging.
- National Board of Physician Nutrition Specialists: educational materials, credentialing programs, toolkits, and other provisions to improve physicians' nutrition literacy.

## Level 1: Individual

Educate families, patients, and caregivers about malnutrition

### Opportunities

- Launch multimedia malnutrition prevention campaigns.
- Establish a Malnutrition Awareness Day or Week.
- Host malnutrition education programs at health departments and other local venues.

### Resources

- Administration on Aging/Elderly Nutrition Program: congregate/home-delivered meals, nutrition screening/assessments, nutrition education.
- Medline Plus: nutrition for seniors dietary information.
- AARP Foundation: Drive to End Hunger program to help promote food security.
- USDA Nutrition for Older Adults: online resources to educate older adults on meal planning, shopping, budgeting.
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: online support to find a registered dietitian nutritionist for nutrition counseling.
- Comfort Keepers—STOP Senior Hunger: campaign to help older adults/caregivers identify malnutrition and hunger.
- Families and Work Institute: online Employer Elder Care Toolkit on nutrition.

