

## Managing Malnutrition: Advice For Carers

### Introduction:

Malnutrition affects millions of people in the UK and, in the older population, makes them more susceptible to disease.

There are many factors that can increase a person's risk of malnutrition. These include:

- Being over the age of 65
- Having conditions such as diabetes, kidney disease, chronic respiratory diseases, dementia, cancer or other long term conditions.
- Mobility difficulties and/or being unable to cook or feed yourself
- Swallowing difficulties

*As a carer you will likely work with many people with these risk factors on a day to day basis, and at times may be the only professional involved in their care. For this reason, carers have a key role in identifying and managing nutritional concerns.*

### When to have Nutrition Concerns about your client and how to manage them:

Nutritional concern	Actions
<p><b>Unintentional weight loss.</b> Does the client (or family) report weight loss or show visual signs of weight loss e.g. loose clothing/rings, ill-fitting dentures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the online 'MUST' calculator (<a href="#">link below</a>) and inform the GP of the clients score. This will allow the GP to refer to dietitians and/or start nutritional supplements if needed.</li> <li>• A mid-upper arm measurement can be used for patients who can not be weighed (<a href="#">guidance attached</a>)</li> <li>• Start a 'Food first approach' (<a href="#">see attached leaflet</a>) • The client or family may wish to buy over the counter 'build up' dinks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Poor food intake.</b> Does your client often refuse meals, for example more than once per day, or leave half or more of the portion?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start a food and fluid chart (<a href="#">see resource attached</a>)</li> <li>• Implement a 'food first approach' (<a href="#">see attached leaflet</a>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Swallowing problems:</b> Is the client having difficulties swallowing e.g. coughing/choking when eating and/or drinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with the GP who may consider referral to speech and language therapy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bowel issues.</b> Sometimes dietary intake is affected by the client's bowels. Are there concerns regarding constipation or loose motions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider over the counter medications, or requesting GP review if issues persist.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pressure Ulcers</b> Clients with pressure ulcers may have increased nutritional needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with community nursing team for pressure care review.</li> </ul>

#### Useful links:

[www.bapen.org.uk/must-and-self-screening/must-calculator](http://www.bapen.org.uk/must-and-self-screening/must-calculator)

[www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition](http://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition)

[www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html](http://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html) [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

[www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk) [www.dementiacarers.org.uk](http://www.dementiacarers.org.uk) [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)