

Department of
NUTRITION & DIETETICS

Understanding and Management of Malnutrition



WHAT IS MALNUTRITION?

This brochure focuses on the undernutrition aspect of malnutrition, which is a condition caused by inadequate intake of nutrients. Poor appetite or increased nutritional requirements due to medical conditions, can result in inadequate nutritional intake.

WHO IS AT RISK OF MALNUTRITION?

- AIDS
- Cancer
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Presence of wound or pressure ulcer
- Stomach and digestive related conditions e.g. malabsorption
- Swallowing impairment e.g. unable to eat normal/usual food
- Trauma and Burns
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Mental health conditions e.g. depression
- Dementia
- Any condition resulting in reduced food intake

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

- Loss of weight and muscle mass
- Reduced functional status
- Poor immunity
- Poor wound healing
- Higher risks of complications after surgery
- Longer recovery times from illnesses

SIMPLE SELF-SCREENING TOOL TO IDENTIFY RISK OF MALNUTRITION

- ☐ Unplanned weight loss (3kg or more in past 3-6 months)
☐ Eating lesser than before (especially if less than ½ of usual in the past 5 days or more)

✓ If you have answered "YES" to either or both of the above, it is recommended that you consult with a dietitian for a more detailed assessment.

WHY CONSULT A DIETITIAN?

- Evaluate your current eating habits and assess your specific dietary needs for your health conditions.
- Receive personalised advice and a nutrition plan that meets your nutritional needs and goals.
- Monitor and re-evaluate your nutritional progress at regular intervals to assess if nutritional goals have been met.

The following are some suggestions to help you cope with poor appetite and/or weight loss. They aim to improve your overall nutritional intake. However, if your poor appetite and/or weight loss persists, you are strongly encouraged to consult with a dietitian for a personalised assessment and recommendations.

BASIC DIETARY GUIDELINES

1. Aim to have small, frequent meals throughout the day

- ✓ Have six small meals rather than three large meals.
- ✓ Eat more when your appetite is good e.g. some people eat better in the early morning.
- ✓ If you are unable to manage a meal, have a milky drink or a small snack or a dessert instead.

2. Make every mouthful count

- ✓ Choose high energy foods and drinks e.g. cream-filled biscuits rather than plain biscuits.
- ✓ Try to have some fruit juices, 3-in-1 cereals, high protein drinks (e.g. milk and yoghurt drinks) between meals.

3. Prepare energy-dense meals

- ✓ Include foods rich in protein and energy e.g. meat, chicken, fish, egg, milk, cheese, yoghurt, custard, nuts or legumes in each meal or snack.

4. Enjoy your meals and eat a variety of food

- ✓ Vary your meals so eating does not become a chore.
- ✓ Eat with your family or friends so that mealtimes are enjoyable occasions.

5. Nutritional supplements

- ✓ Oral nutrition supplements are mostly complete in nutrition and may be recommended to aid in improving nutritional intake. There are many options of nutritional supplements available. Before commencing on these, it is helpful to discuss this further with a dietitian for personalised recommendations.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Malnutrition is caused by many factors. Without early nutritional intervention, it may lead to adverse consequences such as unnecessary weight loss, poor immunity and longer recovery time.
- Goals of dietary management are to maximise overall nutritional intake through smaller and frequent meals, and to prevent deterioration of malnutrition.
- If your poor appetite and/or weight loss persists, it is highly recommended that you arrange a consultation with a dietitian for further assessment and recommendations.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

To consult a dietitian, please call 6357 8322 for appointment. You will need to obtain a referral from your doctor for a dietitian consultation.

Clinic B2
TTSH Medical Centre, Level B2
Contact:
6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



Scan the QR Code with your smart
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or visit

<https://for.sg/ttsh-health-library>

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