

It is a little known fact that in the UK over 1.3 million older people are at risk of malnutrition, with 93% living in their own homes.ⁱ

32% of people are already malnourished or at risk when they are admitted to hospitalⁱⁱ and 35% on admission to a care home.ⁱⁱⁱ

It's associated with several long term conditions, such as COPD, cancer, dementia and swallowing problems (dysphagia) as well as physical disability and social factors which can affect people in later life, such as bereavement, loneliness and isolation.

The evidence shows malnutrition can seriously undermine an older person's health and wellbeing. Yet in many cases it is preventable, and is more cost effective to treat than not – so we could be improving the quality of people's lives and saving money.^{iv}

Despite this, there is often low awareness amongst older people and carers, and many healthcare professionals say they do not know what services are in place or lacked confidence in their knowledge and skills to support people who are at risk.^v

Set up in 2012 and chaired by Dianne Jeffrey, the Malnutrition Task Force seeks to champion the cause and raise awareness of how to identify and treat malnutrition.

Research has found that individuals who are malnourished experience more ill health.

Malnourished people:

- Visit their GP twice as often.^{vi}
- Experience more hospital admissions and have longer lengths of stay.^{vii}
- Have an increased risk of infection and antibiotic use.^{viii}
- Have longer recovery times from surgery and illness, and increased risk of mortality.^{ix}

Here's what you can do to help:

New standards around nutrition & hydration, food and drink in hospitals came in to force on 1st April 2015 – **ask your local hospital what changes they have implemented.**

NHS England recently launched guidance on 'Commissioning Excellent Nutrition and Hydration'. **Ask your CCG how they are taking forward the guidance.**

Steps to tackle malnutrition should be embedded in both public health and long term condition pathways. **Contact your local authority and CCG – do they have a plan in your area?**

The sites in our Pilot Prevention Programme worked together to implement malnutrition prevention in their community – **get in touch to learn more about what can be achieved.**

Finally and most importantly, ask the question:

What can you and your organisation do to prevent malnutrition?

Take a look at our website www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk and download resources to raise awareness of how to identify and treat malnutrition.

To find out more about the Malnutrition Task Force, contact us at enquiries@malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk

i Based on their research, including BAPEN's National Screening Weeks (2007 to 2011), the specialist association BAPEN estimates that malnutrition affects 3 million people in the UK, 1.3 million of whom are estimated to be over the age of 65. For more information see: www.bapen.org.uk/about-malnutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition.

ii "Nutrition screening surveys in hospitals in the UK, 2007-2011," BAPEN, 2014, p.41

iii "Nutrition Screening Surveys in care homes in the UK," BAPEN, 2015, p.7

iv "The cost of malnutrition in England and potential cost savings from nutritional interventions", BAPEN, 2015, p1

v Online survey of health and care professionals conducted by Dods Research, sample size 1518, fieldwork conducted between 9th and 18th December 2015

vi Guest, J. F., Panca, M., Baeyens, J.P., de Man, F., Ljungqvist, O., Pichard, C., Wait, S & Wilson, L. (2011) 'Health economic impact of managing patients following a community-based diagnosis of malnutrition in the UK', *Clinical Nutrition*, Volume 30, Issue 4, Pages 422-429, August 2011

vii *ibid*

viii Elia M, Stratton RJ, Russell C, Green C. & Pang F. (2005) 'The cost of disease related malnutrition in the UK and economic considerations for the use of oral nutritional supplements (ONS) in adults'. Redditch: BAPEN.

ix Heismayr, M., Schindler, K., Pernicka, E. Schuh, C., Schoeniger-Hekele, A., Bauer, P., Laviano, A., Lovell, A.D., Mouhieddine, M., Schuetz, T., Schneider, S.M., Singer, P., Pichard, C., Howard, P., Jonkers, C., Grecu, I., Ljungqvist, O. & The NutritionDay Audit Team. (2009) Decreased food intake is a risk factor for mortality in hospitalised patients: The Nutrition Day survey 2006', *Clinical Nutrition*, 28, pp 484-491