



Our call to action in UK Malnutrition Awareness Week

We are calling on all members of the public to:

- **Be clear that losing weight is not a normal part of ageing.** Weight loss in later life can be a sign that someone is malnourished or is at risk of malnutrition. It is important to keep an eye on your weight as you get older and to spread the message that unexplained weight loss should be taken seriously as it can have a significant impact on health and quality of life.
- **Look out for your relatives, friends and neighbours.** Make sure you can recognise the signs and symptoms of unexplained weight loss including subtle signs such as loose clothing and jewellery, dentures not fitting properly or a smaller appetite. Think about whether somebody may be at risk because of their age, or a recent change in personal circumstance, for example bereavement or depression. Have a conversation about food and appetite.
- **Check your own weight and that of people you believe may be at risk.** If you are worried about your own weight or the weight of somebody you care about, use the simple, online self-screening tool developed by BAPEN (www.malnutritionselfscreening.org/self-screening.html), seek medical advice and look for things you can do to help (www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/campaign/#Guides).

We are calling on all organisations of influence and policy makers to:

- **Drive public awareness, deliver better training for professionals.** Preventing and treating malnutrition relies on increasing public awareness and professional training, alongside an integrated system of health and social care and with support for older people, their carers and families.
- **Increase awareness of the hidden problem of dehydration, improve access to good dental care, and ensure older people have help with eating and drinking when they need it.** Dehydration is a serious and often hidden problem in older people. If eating is painful or difficult, dentures move or food gets caught, it not only makes eating challenging, but puts people off eating and drinking.
- **Provide more support for older people experiencing the transitions of later life.** The life changes that are commonly experienced by people in later life, such as ill health, bereavement or taking on caring duties, can have a negative impact on their appetite and diet, as they may struggle to find time to cook or lose the ability to cook or shop for themselves, or lose their appetite or become disinterested in food.

*When talking about malnutrition, BAPEN defines 'older people' as people who are aged 65 years or over.