



JOINT MISSION STATEMENT

UK MALNUTRITION AWARENESS WEEK

Ask, Look, Listen. We're ALL in this together.

**17th – 23rd
NOVEMBER
2025**

UK Malnutrition Awareness Week was founded in 2018 by the Malnutrition Task force and BAPEN to raise awareness of undernutrition and dehydration in the UK.

The campaign aims to increase understanding of the dangers, risk factors, and signs of malnutrition and dehydration among health and social care professionals, community groups, the public, parliamentarians, and policymakers.

This year's campaign highlights the importance of recognising every interaction - whether with patients, family members, or neighbours - as an opportunity to spot the signs of malnutrition and dehydration early. By working together, we can improve understanding, identification, prevention, and management of these conditions.

The challenge

More than three million people across the UK are either malnourished or at risk of becoming malnourished, with an estimated one million of these people over the age of 65.¹

Since the coronavirus outbreak and with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, we believe more people to be at risk of malnutrition. The aftermath of lockdowns has led to people being more isolated, and the cost-of-living crisis has meant that many people are feeling extremely worried about how to manage household finances, everything from heating to eating. High price rises in food and energy are forcing people to make tough decisions which may lead to people skipping meals, increasing the risk of vulnerability to malnutrition.

Malnutrition is both a cause and consequence of ill health and is often a hidden problem that goes unnoticed.

Malnutrition can have a devastating effect on physical health and emotional wellbeing and can often lead to or exacerbate long-term health problems. Yet sadly many of us are not familiar with the signs, symptoms and risk factors that would help us recognise that a loved one or somebody in our community is at risk of suffering from the condition.

Our vision

We envisage a future for the UK where preventing and managing malnutrition is everybody's business. This means that we want:

- Members of the public to understand the risks, causes, and signs of malnutrition, and know where to access resources and self-screening tools.
- Health and social care professionals to be able to spot the signs and symptoms of malnutrition and routinely screen for malnutrition.
- Policy makers to be engaged in helping to raise the profile of malnutrition (and dehydration) as a public health issue.

Ask, Look, Listen

This year we have a simple request - for everybody to Ask, Look and Listen and recognise that we are ALL in this together.

Ask If you know somebody who may be vulnerable because they are older, because they have health problems, or perhaps because they are isolated, don't be afraid to ask them if they are eating and drinking okay. Don't be afraid to ask about somebody's appetite or ability to prepare food and drink, it could make all the difference and help you stop malnutrition in its tracks.

Look Always be on the lookout for telltale signs of unplanned weight loss such as looser clothing, loose belts or rings or dentures. And remember you won't always see weight loss so keep your eyes open for other signs like empty fridges and cupboards.

Listen carefully to what somebody is telling you about their life. It may not be about eating and drinking directly, but is it about feeling lonely, or losing interest in things that usually give them pleasure? Practice active listening and think about how the way somebody is feeling generally may affect how they are able to look after themselves.



Malnutrition Task Force
Eating and drinking well in later life



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Malnutrition Task Force
Eating and drinking well in later life

The Malnutrition Task Force are united to combat preventable and avoidable malnutrition and dehydration among older people in the UK. Established in 2012, we believe that good nutrition and hydration is vital to enabling older people to live fulfilling and independent lives.

We seek to raise awareness of undernutrition in later life its causes, and provide information and guidance, work with partners across sectors and settings to improve the working lives of older people in the UK.

For more information visit:

<https://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/ukmaw2025-save-date>

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As we mark our 8th UK Malnutrition Awareness Week 2025, the Malnutrition Task Force stands united in our mission to combat preventable and avoidable malnutrition and dehydration among older people in the UK.

Malnutrition is both a cause and a consequence of ill health. It leads to more hospital admissions, longer stays, and a loss of independence for many. The causes of malnutrition are complex, but key contributing factors include worsening of long-term health conditions, mobility challenges, loneliness, social isolation, bereavement, and the rising cost of living.

We are committed to overcoming the myth that it is 'normal' to lose weight as you get older and want to dispel the outdated perception that becoming frail is all but inevitable in later life.

Over 60s now make up a larger part of the UK population than under 18s, making UKMAW more important than ever before. Let us use this campaign to shine a light on this hidden crisis, build on good practice, and support one another to spot the signs early so that timely and effective nutrition interventions can be implemented. Raising awareness of malnutrition and dehydration always has been, and always will be, everybody's business.

Lesley Carter, Malnutrition Task Force Lead and Head of Health and Care Clinical Practice at Age UK



BAPEN

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As healthcare professionals, we see first-hand the profound impact that malnutrition has on patients, families, and the NHS. Evidence shows that malnutrition is not only a major contributor to poor health outcomes - exacerbating comorbidities and prolonging recovery - but also places a significant and avoidable burden on our health and care system.

Treating a patient who is malnourished costs the NHS two to three times more than treating someone who is well-nourished. Hospital admissions are longer, complications are more frequent, and the risk of readmission rises. Yet, malnutrition is often preventable with timely identification and intervention.

This is why, during UKMAW, I urge all healthcare professionals to make nutrition a core part of their practice. By routinely screening for malnutrition, acting on the signs, and advocating for robust nutritional care pathways, we can not only improve patient outcomes but also help safeguard the sustainability of our health service.

Now, more than ever, we can work together across disciplines and settings to reduce the impact and cost of malnutrition in the UK.

Dr Nick Thompson, BAPEN President

BAPEN is a charity that works tirelessly to raise awareness of malnutrition in the UK. The organisation was founded in 1992 to bring together dietitians, doctors, nurses, patients and pharmacists into an integrated and effective organisation dedicated to improving nutritional care. Our aim is to advance the nutritional care of patients in health and care settings and those at risk of malnutrition within the wider community.

For more information visit:

<https://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition-undernutrition/combating-malnutrition/uk-malnutrition-awareness-week>



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