

Older Adult Malnutrition and Food Insecurity Screening

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) recently convened a multi-stakeholder statewide commission to look at malnutrition in Ohio, and issued a report with policy recommendations and local strategies to address malnutrition (https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c577a8_48c4ffc3726b4f64939760bb76f0c35b.pdf).

Partners in Central Ohio felt that the time had come to develop a common, regional plan to address senior malnutrition and ways to implement the ODH Commission Report’s policy recommendations. The first result of this work is the following tool that all providers—physicians (independent practices and hospitalists/specialists), nurses, social service agencies, care coordinators, and registered dietitians—can utilize to quickly identify BOTH malnutrition AND food insecurity risk with their older adult patients/clients, as well as provide direction and resources regarding next steps based on the results.

MALNUTRITION SCREENING TOOL ¹		
1. Have you recently lost weight without trying?		
No	0	
Not Sure	2	
Yes	1	
<i>If yes, how much weight have you lost?</i> 2-13 lbs		
14-23 lbs	2	
24-33 lbs	3	
34 or more lbs	4	
Unsure	2	Question 1 Score:
2. Have you been eating poorly because of decreased appetite?		
No	0	Question 2 Score:
Yes	1	
		Total Score:

Results

Questions 1 & 2 Total	
Score of 0-1	Patient is not at risk for malnutrition; screen again in 1 year or if condition changes.
Score of 2 or more	Patient is at risk for malnutrition and needs a referral to registered dietitian and/or a healthcare provider and ongoing monitoring.

¹ Ferguson M, et al. Nutrition. 1999;15(6):458-464.

Resources

- Find a [Registered Dietitian Nutritionist \(RDN\)](#)
- Congregate Meals:** served in group settings, provide nutritious meals and opportunities for social interactions
- Home Delivered Meals:** often referred to as “meals on wheels,” provides nutritious meals delivered to the door of older adults with limited mobility, who are homebound, or have a lack of transportation

Helpful Conversation Starters:

- Malnutrition can be caused by not getting enough of the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy or recover. You can be underweight or overweight and be malnourished. Have you ever been screened for malnutrition before?
- Have there been any changes in your health or life that may have caused weight loss?

For more information, visit the [Ohio Department on Aging](#).

FOOD INSECURITY SCREENING TOOL^{1, 2}

1. Within the last 12 months, I worried whether my food would run out before I had money to buy more.

Often True

Sometimes True

Never True

2. Within the last 12 months, the food I bought just didn't last and I didn't have money to get more.

Often True

Sometimes True

Never True

Results

Questions 1 & 2 Responses

Never true for both questions

Patient is not food insecure; screen again in 1 year or if living conditions change.

Often true/sometimes true for one or both questions

Patient should be referred to meal services (see resources section) and/or a foodbank/food pantry; continue to monitor.

Resources

- **Congregate Meals:** served in group settings, provide nutritious meals and opportunities for social interactions
- **Home Delivered Meals:** often referred to as “meals on wheels,” provides nutritious meals delivered to the door of older adults with limited mobility, who are homebound, or have a lack of transportation
- **Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program:** provides coupons for older residents that can be redeemed for fresh feeds from farmers’ markets and roadside stands (available in select counties)
- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program:** supplements the diets of older adults with nutritious foods
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of those in need

Helpful Conversation Starters:

- Just like your medication is important to keep you healthy, food is medicine too. Have you ever learned about the importance of getting enough nutritious food before?
- Who typically does the shopping for food in your home?
- I noticed you are having trouble getting enough healthy foods. Are you aware of the options available to you to access food or resources to buy food?

For more information,
visit the [Ohio Department on Aging](#).

¹ Hager ER, et al. Pediatrics. 2010;126(1): e26-e32.

² Gundersen C, et al. Public Health Nutr. 2017;20(8):1367-71.

