

## Malnutrition: An Older Adult Crisis

### Introduction

Malnutrition is, simply stated, a nutrition imbalance which can include a lack of calories or a lack of nutrients, including protein. It can happen in people who are overweight or underweight. Malnutrition can lead to acute illness, chronic disease, and poor health outcomes. **Older adults are particularly susceptible to malnutrition.** Three important steps can improve older adult malnutrition care:

- Screening all patients
- Assessing nutritional status for those at malnutrition risk
- Intervening with appropriate nutrition for those malnourished/at risk

### What Can Congress Do to Help?

- **Fully fund federal nutrition programs impacting seniors** such as the Older Americans Act nutrition programs (congregate meals, Meals on Wheels), SNAP, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and emergency food assistance programs, and **fully fund older adult nutrition research** through NIH and the USDA
- Integrate malnutrition screening and intervention into the **2019 Older Americans Act reauthorization**
- Support the integration of malnutrition screening and intervention into **public and private quality incentive programs**
- **Integrate malnutrition screening into Medicare annual wellness visits** and the Welcome to Medicare exam
- Support the **inclusion of malnutrition in national health objectives, surveys, and reports** on key health indicators for older adults

### For More Information

Please visit the Defeat Malnutrition Today website at [defeatmalnutrition.today](http://defeatmalnutrition.today) for more resources and information. You may also contact our policy director, Meredith Ponder Whitmire, at [mponder@matzblancato.com](mailto:mponder@matzblancato.com).

### FAST FACTS ON MALNUTRITION

**1 out of every 2 older adults are malnourished or are at risk of becoming malnourished**

The cost of disease-associated malnutrition is estimated at **\$51.3 billion per year for older adults**

Poor nutritional status causes a 300% increase in healthcare costs

Malnutrition prevalence by care setting:

- 20-50% in acute care
- 14-51% in post-acute care
- 6-30% in community care

**Only 7% of malnourished hospital patients are diagnosed**

Malnourished hospital patients are 54% more likely to be readmitted after 30 days

More than 40% of people age 50 and over are not getting enough protein daily