

Malnutrition

The role of the dietitian

Malnutrition refers to a condition which develops when the body is deprived of food and other nutrients it needs. It is often associated with people with low weight and can lead to poor health outcomes.

Poor health outcomes

Poor health outcomes include fatigue, poor wound healing, reduced mobility and increased risk of falls and bone fracture, hair loss, impaired brain function and reduced immunity. In children it can also lead to stunted growth.

People with disabilities can find it more difficult to eat healthy food and maintain their weight. This might be due to:

- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Reliance on others for feeding, cooking and shopping
- Loss of appetite
- A lack of energy
- Poor understanding of healthy food choices
- Medications which can contribute to weight loss or changes in appetite
- Sensory sensitivities
- Gastrointestinal issues (constipation, diarrhoea, reflux, etc.) which lead to discomfort.



The role of the dietitian

The dietitian's role in managing malnutrition can include:

- Creating an individual meal plan
- Coaching you on strategies to get the most out of food intake such as food fortification
- Prescribe oral nutritional supplements (liquid nutrition)
- Prescribe an appropriate tube feeding regime
- Recommend appropriate vitamin and mineral supplements
- Show you how to make healthy recipes.
- Educate families and carers.



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