

Are you or someone you care about at risk of malnutrition?

Malnutrition is a deficiency of nutrients and can occur when you don't eat a balanced diet.

Risk factors for malnutrition include:

Eating and drinking less

Eating and drinking less, not being able to finish meals or missing meals altogether and keeping limited stocks of food can lead to unbalanced or inadequate nutrition.

Major life events

Bereavement, moving home, illness, surgery or accidents are examples of life events that completely change routine and will affect eating and drinking.

Independence

People lose independence and are less able to carry out tasks such as shopping and cooking. This could be because of limited eyesight, stiffness, pain, weakness, confusion, falls or lack of confidence. They may also lose independence because of loss of social support networks, transport or regular carers.

Health

Difficulty chewing or swallowing, pain, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea, forgetfulness, depression and breathlessness are symptoms of poor health that can affect eating and drinking.

Weight changes

Losing weight without trying to is a sign of eating less. Signs include clothes and rings becoming looser.

Malnutrition can be prevented by eating regular balanced meals and snacks throughout the day.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



A balanced diet

The eatwell plate is divided into five food groups. Try to choose a variety of foods from each of the food groups. This will provide the wide range of nutrients needed to stay healthy.

It is important to drink enough. Fluids such as water, tea, coffee, or squash should be taken regularly. It is recommended that adults drink at least 6 – 8 glasses a day.

If you are concerned that you are underweight, not eating enough or that your diet is not balanced you should consult a health care professional such as your GP or NHS Direct Wales.

For more information:

British Dietetic Association Food Facts sheet: 'Getting the Balance Right – A Guide to Healthy Eating'

<http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/index.html>

Or ask at your GP surgery or health centre for leaflets or for further advice.