



Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board

Signs and Indicators of Malnutrition in Adults.

Malnutrition is a serious condition that happens when a person's diet does not contain the right amount of nutrients. It is not about someone being underweight, people classed as obese can be malnourished.

The main symptom of malnutrition (undernutrition) is unintentional weight loss, although this is not always obvious.

Indicators of malnutrition in adults include:

- Swelling of the ankles and sacral area
- Unintentional weight loss of 5-10% of body weight within 3 to 6 months
- Clothes, belts, and jewellery seem loose.
- Swollen abdomen (ascites)
- Sunken eyes
- Dry skin and mucous membranes
- Fever
- Fast pulse
- Unexplained bruising
- Sore mouth and tongue
- Pallor
- Skin lesions and wounds that are slow to heal.
- Yellow or pale skin
- Bone pain
- Reduced muscle mass
- Reduced appetite
- Feeling tired
- Feeling weak
- Being ill often and taking a long time to recover
- Poor concentration
- Low mood, sadness, and depression

Actions to consider if you are concerned an adult may be malnourished.

- Encourage the adult to see their GP.
- Discuss your concerns with the adult and where appropriate their carers/family.
- When possible ascertain the reasons they are malnourished and where appropriate refer the adult to the appropriate service. For example, someone may not be able to walk to the kitchen and a Community Occupational Therapy referral may be required.
- Consider facilitating and supporting the adult to attend GP appointment if necessary.
- Consider whether your concern around malnutrition is an adult safeguarding concern and if so follow your safeguarding adult procedures.
- Consider whether your concern around malnutrition is because of self-neglect or hoarding and if so, follow the Barnsley Safeguarding Adult Board Self-Neglect and Hoarding Policy
- Consider the adults mental capacity to understand the risks of malnutrition and their ability to take action to address their nutrition.
- Consider whether there are other adults or children at risk of malnutrition in the household and follow appropriate safeguarding procedures if needed.
- Seek advice from your own organisation's Safeguarding Lead.
- Document your discussions and actions.