



# Pre-Appointment Decision Box

## Malnutrition Among Older Adults

### Choosing an option to limit weight loss

Malnutrition occurs when a person's nutritional intake is too low to meet his/her needs. It may lead to a decline in health and strength, and reduce the person's ability to do things independently, such as walking, dressing, and bathing. Older adults who have lost too much weight are also at greater risk of dying.

There are several options to help with malnutrition and weight loss. Depending on your priorities, you may or may not decide to make a change. The choice is up to you. These options can cause benefits or harms and it is difficult to predict how they will work for you. We recommend that the decision take into account your values and priorities, and that you share this decision with a healthcare professional.

#### Consider the following:

1. What is my main health problem?
2. What do I need to do to meet my health goals?
3. Why do I need to do anything?
4. What else do I need to know?



#### What is most important to you?




SELECT WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU AND LOOK AT THE OPTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH IT.

✓ Choose a single item at a time.

**Avoid admission to the hospital**

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OPTIONS TO LIMIT YOUR WEIGHT LOSS:

**Avoid adverse effects (nausea, diarrhea, fatigue, loss of appetite, tooth decay)**

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OPTIONS TO LIMIT YOUR WEIGHT LOSS:

**Avoid changing my eating habits**

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OPTIONS TO LIMIT YOUR WEIGHT LOSS:



**Avoid admission to a long-term care home and increase my chances of survival**

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OPTION TO LIMIT YOUR WEIGHT LOSS:



**Limit costs**

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OPTION TO LIMIT YOUR WEIGHT LOSS:



**Other:**

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# Options to limit your weight loss



## Oral Nutritional Supplements

Oral nutritional supplements can be taken as a liquid supplement or as fortified food. Liquid oral nutritional supplements are often taken as beverages, or milkshakes, that are enriched with protein and vitamins. Common brands include Boost, Ensure, and Breeze. Fortifying foods consist of adding milk or protein powder to regular food such as soup, mashed potatoes, or any beverages.

**BENEFITS:** Weight gain, increased limb strength and reduced risk of hospital re-admission.

**HARMS:** Increased adverse effects including fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and tooth decay.

**PRACTICAL ISSUES:** There are some costs associated with oral nutritional supplements and fortifying your food. Adding proteins to food may change its taste.

**WARNING:** Supplements may interact with certain medications by decreasing their efficacy. Before taking oral nutritional supplements, it is best to consult your doctor or pharmacist to ensure there is no interaction with your medications.



## Nutrition Counselling + Oral Nutritional Supplements

Consists of combining nutrition counselling with intake of oral nutritional supplements. Nutrition counselling is done by a nutritionist or a dietitian who offers personalized advice on health and food preparation. It can be done over the phone or in person.

**BENEFITS:** Weight gain.

**HARMS:** Older adults taking oral nutritional supplements can experience nausea, diarrhea, fatigue, loss of appetite, or tooth decay. These adverse effects are rare.

**PRACTICAL ISSUES:** Accessing a nutritionist or dietitian working in the public sector may require a referral from your doctor. There may also be a waiting list to access these services. Access to a dietitian in private practice may be easier. Their costs vary, with the initial visit slightly higher than follow-up meetings. Follow-up is generally done every 2 to 4 weeks.



## Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels is a service that delivers meals to your home. The meals may be frozen or fresh and can be adapted to your diet or preferences. You have the option of various menu offerings, from appetizers to dessert. Meals on Wheels can be used more or less intensively, depending on your needs.

**BENEFITS:** Weight gain, reduced risk of death, reduced risk of hospital admission.

**PRACTICAL ISSUES:** Meals on Wheels costs vary from one organization to another. Meals on Wheels also involves eating food that you did not prepare yourself, and that may not suit your tastes. If you have any restrictions in your diet, it may be hard to find meals. Services may not be available in all locations. Some services provide frozen or chilled meals. You may find it challenging to heat up the meals.



## Wait and monitor

Waiting and monitoring consists of keeping an eye on your weight without undertaking treatment or changing your lifestyle.

**BENEFITS:** Avoid making a change if the impacts are uncertain, avoid inconveniences associated with the available options.

**HARMS:** Increased risk of death, increased need to be admitted to a long-term care home, increased stay in hospital and increased risk of falls. Decreased independence in daily activities.

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