

Food News

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November 2024

Welcome to Food News. This month's edition is about malnutrition in the UK. We will briefly explore how malnutrition is defined, the scale of the problem, consequences and why it may occur. We will then provide top tips for addressing malnutrition and useful resources for signposting people for support. As always, we will include what fruit and vegetables are in season, with a seasonal recipe to try!

Please get in touch if you have articles or resources to be included in future Food News!

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Warwickshire Food Forum

Food News

is produced by the education & choice sub-group of Warwickshire Food forum

The forum is a multi-agency partnership aiming to improve food

choices for people in Warwickshire.

The focus is on making food affordable, sustainable and providing information to help people make

healthy choices.

The group will also ensure that there is Warwickshire wide help for people who have difficulty affording food.

Understanding Malnutrition: A Growing Concern in the UK

Malnutrition is a condition characterised by deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, an imbalance of essential nutrients, or impaired nutrient utilisation. It can manifest as undernutrition (including wasting, stunting, and underweight), inadequate vitamin or mineral intake, and even overnutrition, leading to overweight, obesity, and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (WHO, 2023; Gandy, 2019). In this article, the term "malnutrition" primarily refers to "undernutrition."

Managing malnutrition, particularly disease-related malnutrition, can be challenging because of illnesses and their treatments. It often requires a comprehensive treatment plan, differing from social malnutrition caused by economic and environmental factors, which can often be resolved by providing adequate food and drink (Managing Adult Malnutrition, 2021).

The Scale of the Problem

Malnutrition is a significant public health issue in the UK, costing around £23.5 billion annually, which accounts for approximately 15% of the total health and social care expenditure (Stratton et al., 2018). Over 3 million people in the UK are either malnourished or at risk, with about 93% of these individuals are living in the community.



Consequences of Malnutrition

- Reduced muscle strength and frailty:** Leading to an increased risk of falls, and
- Slower recovery:** From illness and surgery, resulting in poorer clinical outcomes.
- Impaired immune response:** Making individuals more susceptible to infections.
- Mental Health impact:** Including anxiety, depression, and altered cognitive function.
- Delayed Wound Healing:** Complicating recovery from injuries and surgeries.

Why Does Malnutrition Occur?

- Reduced dietary intake:** Due to illness, poor appetite, or swallowing difficulties. Also, poor nutritional intake with a diet high in calories but low in vitamins, minerals and fibre, e.g. take aways, ready meals, crisps, sweets, energy drinks, etc. (Even if you are seemingly overweight, you can still be malnourished)
- Reduced absorption of nutrients:** Seen in conditions like Crohn's disease.
- Increased nutrient losses or altered requirements:** For example, in chronic kidney disease.
- Increased energy expenditure:** Often seen in conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or cancer (Saunders & Smith, 2010).

Addressing Malnutrition

The Food-First Approach

A key strategy in managing malnutrition is the **food-first approach**, which involves using regular foods to increase calorie and protein intake. This can include:

- **Eating small, frequent meals:** To ensure sufficient nutrient intake throughout the day.
- **Incorporating high-calorie and high-protein foods:** Such as adding cheese, cream, nut butter, and eggs to meals.
- **Using calorie-boosting ingredients:** Like butter, oils, and sugar to increase energy intake without needing to consume large portions (Managing Adult Malnutrition, 2021).

Food Fortification

Another effective method is **food fortification**, which involves adding extra nutrients to everyday foods. Examples include:

- **Fortified breakfast cereals:** Enriched with vitamins and minerals.
- **Milk powders and protein powders:** Added to drinks and dishes to boost nutritional value.
- **Fortified ready meals:** Designed to be convenient and nutrient-dense, particularly for individuals struggling to prepare balanced meals themselves (BAPEN, 2021).

Food first and food fortification approaches are often the first line of intervention before considering other nutritional support options. They help promote weight gain and improve nutritional status, especially when tailored to the individual's preferences and eating habits.

Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)

If a food-first approach and food fortification are insufficient, **Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)** may be considered. ONS are commercially prepared products that can be prescribed to help meet the body's nutritional needs. They are designed to complement regular food intake, providing essential nutrients in a small volume. While ONS have been shown to improve clinical outcomes, concerns exist regarding their cost and efficacy when used as a primary intervention without attempting other approaches first (Thomson et al., 2022).

Malnutrition Awareness Week

Bearing in mind Malnutrition Awareness Week in November (11th–17th), we encourage everyone to participate in the BAPEN annual screening survey, which aims to improve our understanding of malnutrition prevalence and the effectiveness of nutritional support across the UK. Your involvement can help shape future strategies to combat malnutrition and ensure better health outcomes for those at risk. Link for the survey <https://forms.office.com/e/euWzQ06Lad> .

Raising awareness helps us work together across healthcare, social care, and communities to better identify, treat, and prevent malnutrition. A coordinated approach is key for early detection and support, leading to better outcomes for those at risk.

Addressing Malnutrition

The Food-First Approach - More Top Tips

A **food-first approach** is recommended—following a healthy, balanced diet with enough protein, healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, 6 –8 glasses of water, all in line with the individual’s nutritional needs. However, The Malnutrition Task Force (2024) states that, *“When we have a small appetite or have difficulty chewing or swallowing, there are a number of things we can do for ourselves that may encourage us to eat better.”* They advise the following:

Eating anything is always better than nothing, but here are some top tips for eating well:

First of all, eat more protein. Having protein with every meal will help us keep well-nourished.

- Eat food that you enjoy.
- Try eating small meals and snacks six times a day rather than three bigger meals.
- Eat small portions – little and often.
- Move to full-fat foods like milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- Have milky drinks with full-fat milk and a biscuit between meals.
- If you have difficulty chewing, try eating soft foods such as scrambled eggs or yoghurts.
- If your teeth or dentures are a problem, make an appointment with your dentist
- If you’re having trouble cooking or cutting up food, speak to your GP or local council. They may be able to arrange an occupational therapy assessment. They can give lots of practical ideas and tools to help.
- If you have trouble shopping or cooking food, a local community organisation may be able to help. Supermarkets offer online shopping and home delivery services, which may make shopping easier for you.
- Make use of home delivery services such as Wiltshire Farm Foods. They also have foods that are soft, fork mashable and textured for all eating difficulties.
- If you’re finding it difficult to chop or prepare fruit and vegetables, you can buy pre-chopped packets in supermarkets.



Addressing Malnutrition

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Addressing Malnutrition

Where to find food in the community for those in need

Make Every Contact Count, MECC, by signposting to local food services in Warwickshire. There are many more groups and organizations doing good work to help feed and support those in need. This is not an exhaustive list. Have a look for services in your area and around your place of work (links on page 10).

Community Grocers	Community grocers offer food and other essentials to purchase at low cost or a small membership fee.
Communal Kitchens	Communal kitchens, or community eating, provide hot meals which are available to everyone in the community. These projects allow people to socialise whilst they enjoy a hot meal.
Homeless Help	Food and Shelter. Specified public authorities and local housing authorities have a duty of care to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness, and to provide services to all those who are eligible. There is a lot of support to help you. Please seek advice as soon as possible if you are worried.
Food Banks	<p>Food banks provide emergency food, other essentials and compassionate support to people who are struggling with the cost of living. Food banks can often provide other essential services on-site such as help with finances.</p> <p>In 2023/24 approximately 3.12 million people needed to use a food bank in the UK, and this number is increasing (Statistics, 2024).</p>
WRCC's Warm Hubs	This project, supported by Cadent, brings residents together and supports communities to tackle social isolation and fuel poverty, plus related cost of living issues. They meet in village halls, community centres, etc. Familiarise yourself with some locations – it could be a lifeline for someone in need.
Slow Cooking Courses	<p>Winter in particular is a time for warm, hearty and healthy meals and slow cooking is an ideal way of preparing these with reduced energy consumption (approximately 4p per hour).</p> <p>The Council is funding the cost of chefs, ingredients and venues, Cadent is providing slow cookers to the participants for free. Find a free session near you.</p>
Community Food Fleet	<p>A not-for-profit “Meals on Wheels” service. Working across Warwickshire, this is a flexible meal ordering service that delivers 365 days a year, helping people live independently. Anyone can order for themselves or a relative, with no criteria.</p> <p>But the majority of those enjoying these meals tend to be elderly people living at home alone, who may not see anyone else on a daily basis and who can suffer from ill health and potentially malnutrition if they do not eat regularly.</p>

I need support paying for food, energy and water now! You may be eligible for support through the Local Welfare Scheme. Visit: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/localwelfarescheme>

or call 0800 4081448 or 01926 359182. Phone lines are open Mon to Thurs from 9- 5pm and Fri 9 - 4.30pm.

Addressing Malnutrition

FREE SCHOOL MEALS



School meals are free for lots of families, check if you are eligible to apply!

So much more than lunch...

A free school meal:

- creates healthy eating habits
- improves learning and behaviour
- saves money and time
- helps schools get extra funding

Did you know that claiming free school meals means that your child will get access to free school holiday activities and food?



To find out more and for help to apply for free school meals, please contact: freemeals@warwickshire.gov.uk or call 01926 359189



Every child in

Reception, Y1 and Y2, is eligible for free school meals (in gov funded schools)

You may also receive other qualifying benefits.

Bonus, your school can get extra funding if you do!

Make sure you apply.

Can I apply?

Your child could be eligible for free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support from National Asylum Support Service (NASS)
- Guarantee Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

You should still apply if your child is aged 4-7 and receives a universal free school meal

Food vouchers may also be available through the Household Support Fund. Find out more by contacting your local council.

Find out more and apply at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fsm



What's in Season

Fruit

Apples, Cranberries, Elderberries, Pears

Chicken and Butternut Sage Risotto

Ingredients

- 1 medium butternut squash
- 2 cloves garlic 2-3 sprigs sage
- 2 x 15ml spoons olive oil
- 1 x 5ml spoon paprika and Black pepper (optional)
- 1-2 sprigs thyme and/or rosemary (optional)
- 1 litre chicken stock OR 1 x reduced-salt chicken OR vegetable stock cube dissolved in 1 litre boiling water
- 1 onion
- 150g cooked chicken
- 300g risotto rice (Arborio OR Carnaroli)
- 1 lemon and 15g Parmesan OR other hard cheese

Vegetables

Beetroot, Brussels Sprouts, Butternut Squash, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Chestnuts, Chicory, Jerusalem Artichokes, Kale, Leeks, Onions, Parsnips, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Swede, Swiss Chard, Turnips, Watercress, Wild Mushrooms, Winter Squash



(British Dietetic Association, 2023)

Method 1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan or gas mark 4.

2. Chop the flesh of the squash into 3cm cubes. Line the roasting tin with baking parchment and put the chunks of squash in the oven.

3. Peel, finely chop (or crush) the garlic. Wash the sage, drain and chop 4 of the sage leaves into small pieces. Mix the garlic and sage together and sprinkle into the roasting tin.

4. 1 x 15ml spoon of olive oil. Evenly pour the oil over the squash, garlic and sage and add the paprika.

5. Grind black pepper over the mixture in the roasting tin (if using), add 1-2 sprigs of thyme and/ or rosemary (if using) and roast for 1 hour in the oven. Stir the mixture after 30 minutes and return to the oven for a further 30 minutes.

6. While the squash is roasting, heat the chicken stock in a saucepan on a medium heat (do not boil), then once heated, turn off the hob and set aside.

7. Peel and chop the onion and chop up 6 more sage leaves. Tear the chicken into chunks and set aside for later.

8. Heat 1 x 15ml spoon of olive oil in a wide deep frying pan or saucepan and cook the onion and half the chopped sage until soft (approx. 2-3 minutes). Add the risotto rice to the pan, keep stirring the rice and cook until it starts to stick to the pan. Lower to a medium heat, then add 2 ladles of hot stock and stir in with the rice. Add 2 more ladles and keep stirring. Continue to add ladles of stock and simmer, stirring all the time.

9. When nearly all the stock has been used (approx. 30 min), add the chicken and continue to stir until all the stock has been added.

10. Cut the lemon in half and squeeze the juice, then grate the cheese. Add the juice and cheese to the mixture and stir. Add the roasted butternut squash with the remaining chopped sage. Season to taste.

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If you have an interest in food, hydration, food costs, sustainability and health, and would like to join the food forum, please contact the editor.

If you would like more information about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact the editor who will pass this on to the author of the article.

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