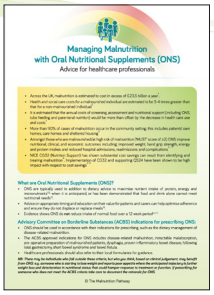
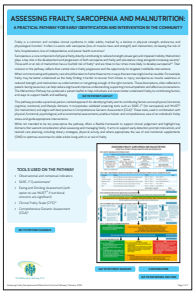
THE Pathway
MAKING MALNUTRITION MATTER
Autumn 2026 | malnutritionpathway.co.uk



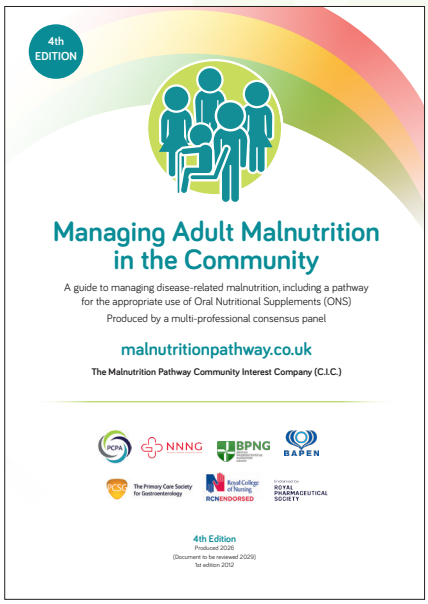




MALNUTRITION PATHWAY RESOURCES

4TH EDITION OF MANAGING ADULT MALNUTRITION IN THE COMMUNITY PUBLISHED

The 4th edition of Managing Adult Malnutrition in the Community is now available, providing updated, evidence-based guidance for healthcare professionals supporting adults with disease-related malnutrition in community settings. While the overall structure remains consistent with the previous 2021 edition, the updated version incorporates new evidence, clearer organisation and strengthened messaging in key areas.



A key part of the update process has been the continued use of a Delphi-style consensus approach, originally used to develop the first edition (2012) and applied to all subsequent updates. This structured method enables a wide range of professionals to voice opinion and helps minimise individual bias by ensuring recommendations are agreed through blinded, iterative reviews. With representation from general practice, nursing, dietetics, pharmacy and physiotherapy, the recommendations reflect real-world practice and the multidisciplinary nature of nutritional care.

Continues on page two

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Reflecting on Progress and Looking Ahead

As 2026 progresses, it is encouraging to see growing momentum and further evidence supporting the dual approach of nutrition combined with resistance training to optimise patient outcomes and well-being in those at risk of malnutrition and sarcopenia. With frailty prevention remaining a key NHS priority, and UK wide nutrition screening weeks continuing to show no reduction in the prevalence of malnutrition (perhaps a reflection of our ageing population and the presence of multimorbidities), there remains a pressing need to keep nutrition, combined with appropriate activity, in the spotlight.

In response, we have launched new guidance and a succinct pathway on frailty prevention and management (see page 3). Designed to support the timely identification of people with, or at risk of, sarcopenia, malnutrition and frailty, the resource provides practical tools for multidisciplinary teams to initiate screening and deliver care that supports resilience, wellbeing and independence. Our thanks go to all the professionals who contributed, especially Consultant Geriatrician, Dr Sanjay Suman, for his invaluable clinical insights.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr Suman in a frailty podcast. For those involved in the care of older adults, I encourage you to listen as he highlights the importance of collective responsibility and acting early to prevent irreversible decline (see page 5).

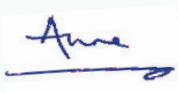
Alongside the frailty pathway, we have also developed a new Case Studies section demonstrating the impact of early nutrition intervention and multidisciplinary working, and what can be achieved when person-centred care is prioritised (see page 5).

This year's publication of the 4th edition of 'Managing Adult Malnutrition in the Community' marks a significant step forward. Aligned with the Nutrition Care Process and underpinned by the latest evidence, it provides a practical framework to screen, assess, treat, prevent and monitor disease-related malnutrition. Developed by a multiprofessional consensus panel spanning general practice, nursing, dietetics, pharmacy and physiotherapy, the guidance reflects both multidisciplinary working and real-world practice. Importantly, it continues to feature in the NICE Clinical Knowledge Summary on Adult Malnutrition, reinforcing the Malnutrition Pathway's role as a trusted national resource.

Finally, work is underway to develop Easy Read resources for people with learning disabilities and low literacy. Supported by a BAPEN grant and specialists in accessible communication, the resources are currently undergoing user testing, with publication planned in the coming months.

Thank you for your continued commitment to making malnutrition matter. Do get in touch if you have any stories or resources you would like to share with us.





Dr Anne Holdoway DHealth BSc RD FBDA
Consultant Dietitian and Malnutrition Pathway Clinical Director

4TH EDITION OF MANAGING ADULT MALNUTRITION IN THE COMMUNITY PUBLISHED

Continued from page one

Key updates include:

- Updated evidence derived from a comprehensive review of the literature
- Stronger emphasis on nutrient dense, high protein food choices and meals, alongside physical activity to preserve muscle mass and strength and prevent sarcopenia
- A newly structured section on oral nutritional support presented under clearer headings to enhance usability
- A refined pathway to act as an aide memoire to guide timely and appropriate use and review of oral nutritional supplements (ONS) for individuals with poor appetite and limited intake recovering from acute illness, recently discharged from hospital or living with long-term conditions
- Greater emphasis on person-centred, holistic care, including individualised dietary counselling, self-screening and self management


Eating Well - Advice for adult patients and carers

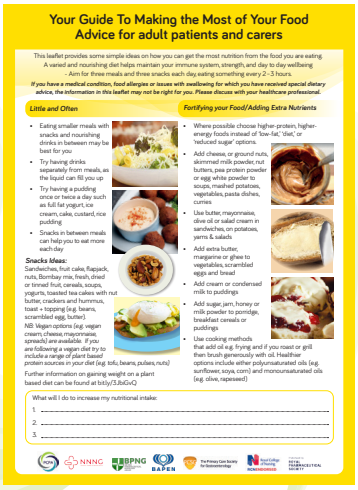
Eatwell Guide

HEALTHY EATING FOR OLDER ADULTS

To have a healthy, balanced diet we should try to:

Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables – aim for at least 5 portions a day

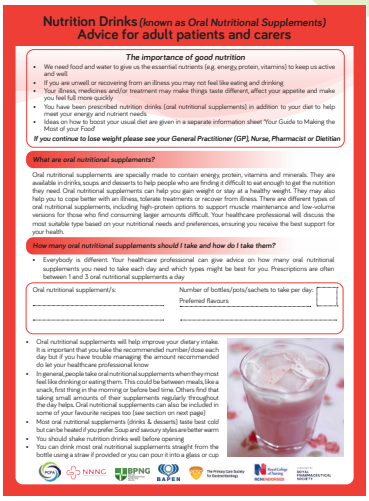
Include a starchy food at each meal


Your Guide To Making the Most of Your Food
Advice for adult patients and carers

Little and Often

Fortifying your Food/Adding Extra Nutrients

Snacks Ideas:


Nutrition Drinks (known as Oral Nutritional Supplements)
Advice for adult patients and carers

The importance of good nutrition

What are oral nutritional supplements?

How many oral nutritional supplements should I take and how do I take them?

The updated edition builds on the strong foundations of previous versions while reflecting the latest evidence and clinical experience, and the value of multidisciplinary input and person-centred nutritional care.

The three accompanying patient leaflets have also been updated to reflect current best practice, including new content on eating a balanced diet for those at low risk of malnutrition (green leaflet), encouraging nutrient dense foods and adequate protein and personalised action planning in those at medium and high risk of malnutrition (yellow leaflet), and updated advice on optimising prescribed ONS (red leaflet).

All resources are available at malnutritionpathway.co.uk

UPDATED ORAL NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS (ONS) LEAFLET

We are pleased to share that our Oral Nutritional Supplement (ONS) leaflet has been updated this year to provide clearer, more practical guidance for professionals supporting adults who require prescribed nutritional support.

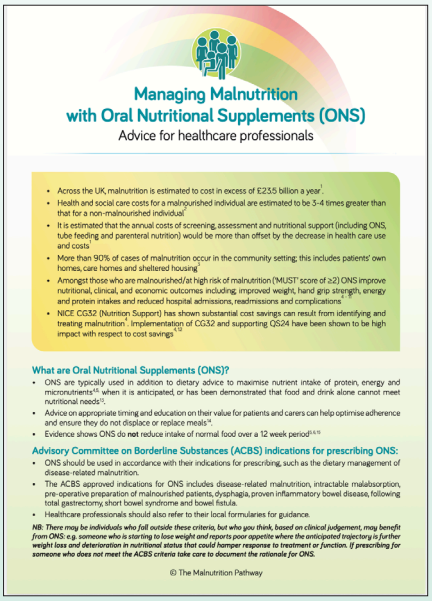
The refreshed leaflet aligns with the 4th edition of Managing Adult Malnutrition in the Community and reflects current best practice in selecting, reviewing and supporting the appropriate use of ONS.

The updated resource incorporates:

- Intuitive headings to guide decision making
- Practical advice on choosing the most suitable product based on clinical need, individual preferences and tolerance
- Guidance on supporting adherence, including tips for timing, flavour choice and encouraging consumption in daily routines
- Structured prompts for ongoing review to ensure ONS remains appropriate and effective
- Information on when to seek specialist dietetic input, particularly for complex cases or where long-term use of ONS is anticipated

The leaflet reinforces that ONS should be used purposefully, alongside food-based strategies, with regular monitoring built into pathways to ensure the ONS continue to meet an individual's needs and deliver clinical and cost-effective care.

The updated ONS leaflet is available to download at **malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/ons.pdf**


Managing Malnutrition
with Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)
Advice for healthcare professionals

What are Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)?

Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) indications for prescribing ONS:

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NEW FRAILTY, SARCOPENIA & MALNUTRITION PRACTICAL PATHWAY



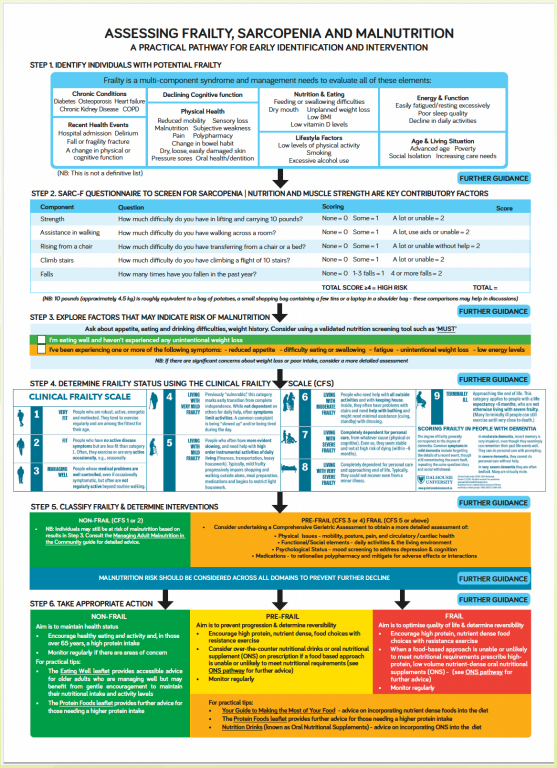
A new Frailty, Sarcopenia & Malnutrition Practical Pathway has been developed and launched to support earlier identification and management of three overlapping conditions - frailty, sarcopenia and malnutrition - that frequently co-exist yet remain under-recognised. Encouraging early action has the capacity to reduce avoidable and irreversible decline and help people living well for longer.

Developed and reviewed by clinicians with extensive experience working with older adults, the new pathway provides a clear, practical framework for understanding the key factors that contribute to frailty and its progression. It brings together the essential components of good practice, including:

- Early identification and assessment of frailty, sarcopenia and malnutrition using validated clinical tools for frailty, sarcopenia and nutritional risk
- Dietary strategies to support adequate intake, including oral nutritional support where appropriate
- Guidance on physical activity and resistance exercise in conjunction with a nutrient dense, high protein diet to maintain or improve strength and function

Reflecting frontline realities, the pathway emphasises multidisciplinary working and proactive rather than reactive care. It aims to strengthen practitioner confidence, enhance clinical decision-making and support improved outcomes for older adults.

Download the pathway at **malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/frailty_pathway.pdf** and the more detailed guidance on frailty at **malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/frailty_tool.pdf**



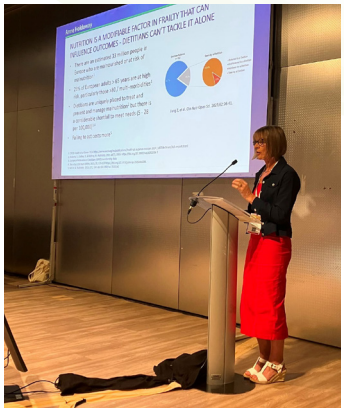
PRESENTATION AT THE EUROPEAN GERIATRIC MEDICINE SOCIETY (EUGMS) ANNUAL CONGRESS IN LILLE, 16TH-18TH SEPTEMBER

We were delighted that Dr Anne Holdoway was invited to present at the EuGMS annual congress in Lille, attended by more than 2,000 delegates who specialise in the care of older people.

Speaking alongside Professor Alfonso Cruz-Jentoft and Professor Rainer Wirth, it was great to see nutrition featuring on the main programme.

In the symposium titled 'Fuel for Function – Integrating nutrition in Comprehensive Geriatric Care to Delay Functional Decline' Professor Alfonso Cruz-Jentoft highlighted the importance of embedding nutrition and frailty assessment in the comprehensive geriatric assessment, how to assess and diagnose malnutrition using GLIM criteria, the importance of identifying and, where possible, managing the underlying causes of malnutrition, and how nutrition and physical activity should be a key feature of the discharge plan.





Professor Rainer Wirth provided a comprehensive overview of the effect of chronic and acute illness and inflammation on appetite and how, combined with immobility, this can rapidly accelerate muscle loss.

Drawing on a plethora of key research, Professor Wirth highlighted the benefit of timely high-protein nutritional support, of sufficient duration (up to 60 days), to effectively treat disease-related malnutrition and prevent irreversible decline.

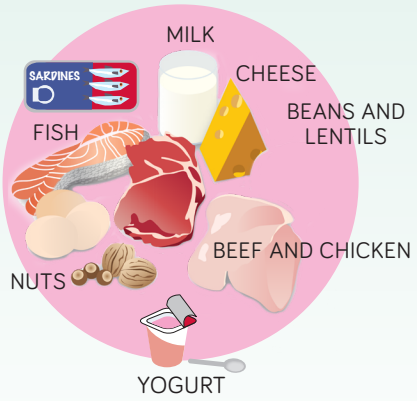
Dr Anne Holdoway then provided a pragmatic approach to nutrition exploring the barriers that prevent adequate oral intake, the solutions available, the timely and effective use of nutritional support, and the practical pathways and resources available to empower members of the multidisciplinary team, across care settings, to deliver tailored interventions, including the resources available freely available on the Malnutrition Pathway website.

MANAGING MALNUTRITION, FRAILTY AND SARCOPENIA IN PRACTICE: QUICK TIPS FOR COMMUNITY PROFESSIONALS

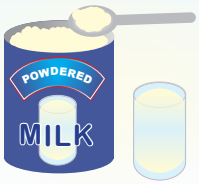
Supporting people at risk of malnutrition, frailty or sarcopenia often relies on small, timely actions taken during everyday contacts in community care. To help busy professionals translate guidance into practical steps, we've highlighted a few simple, evidence informed approaches that can be easily incorporated into routine practice. These quick tips are designed to strengthen early identification, support nutritional care and promote muscle health across the settings where most older adults receive support.

1. Prioritise Protein at Every Meal

Encourage older adults and those living with frailty or sarcopenia to include a source of high quality protein at each meal, such as eggs, yoghurt, cheese, beans or fish.



2. Act Early: Time Is Muscle



If you notice reduced appetite, unintentional weight loss or declining strength, intervene promptly. Simple food based strategies and timely oral nutritional support can prevent avoidable decline and support independence.

3. Screen Routinely and Recheck Regularly

Use tools such as 'MUST', SARC F and the Clinical Frailty Scale to identify risk early. Rescreening at regular intervals helps ensure changes in appetite, weight or function are not missed.



4. Support Adherence to Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS)

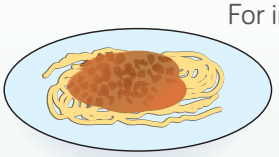
If ONS are prescribed, check that the product is appropriate, tolerated and taken consistently. Discuss flavour preferences, timing and practical tips to help individuals incorporate supplements into daily routines. Check out our ONS information sheet for more information on types of supplements available: **malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/ons.pdf**

5. Make Every Contact Count



Brief conversations during home visits, clinic appointments or care home rounds can uncover early signs of nutritional risk. Ask simple questions about appetite, weight changes and difficulties eating or drinking - see **malnutritionpathway.co.uk/pcn/pcn_library/weight_diet_conversations.pdf**

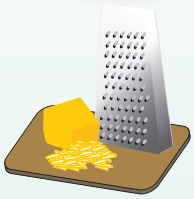
6. Encourage Small, Frequent Meals



For individuals with COPD, frailty or low appetite, smaller meals and snacks can be easier to manage. Fortifying foods with milk powder, cheese, nut butters or oils can increase nutritional value without increasing portion size.



7. Work as a Multidisciplinary Team



Share concerns with colleagues across nursing, dietetics, pharmacy, physiotherapy and general practice. Co-ordinated care leads to better outcomes and clearer, person centred plans.

See **malnutritionpathway.co.uk/frailty** for further information

NEW CASE STUDIES SECTION

A new Case Studies section has been created showcasing real world examples of how the Malnutrition Pathway can be applied across community settings. These case studies highlight practical decision-making, multidisciplinary collaboration and the impact of early nutrition intervention on patient outcomes. Here are some snippets from the cases developed to date:


The Malnutrition Pathway
CASE STUDY SERIES:
MALNUTRITION IN COPD

This case study illustrates how the Managing Malnutrition in COPD pathway guides assessment, intervention, and monitoring for patients at risk of malnutrition.

Michael, 72, male - presents to GP for annual COPD review with reduced food intake

Social History:
- Lives with wife, has three children
- Retired builder
- Enjoys a daily walk, used to walk for 30 minutes, now struggling to complete 10-15 minutes of walking
- Remembers his parents slimming down as they aged – he thought this was natural

Medical History:
- 2-year history of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD);
  - FEV1 74% predicted 1 year ago
  - FEV1 65% predicted today (9% decrease)
  - Starting to notice moderate breathlessness during meals in addition to early satiety
  - Two self-treated exacerbations but no hospital admissions in the past 12 months
  - Ex-smoker with a 40 pack-year history
- Other diagnoses include:
  - Hypertension
  - Osteoarthritis
  - Prediabetes

Medications:
- Salbutamol

Nutritional Status:
- Height: 5'7" (1.7 m)
- Weight 1 year ago: 64kg
- Weight today: 57.5kg (19.9kg/m², representing a 10.2% weight loss)
- Noticing he struggles to eat the same amount of food he used to, particularly over the last 3 months
- He feels his weight loss likely occurred within the last 3-6 months

Due to clinical concern regarding Michael's weight loss and reduced appetite, the Managing Malnutrition in COPD pathway is initiated

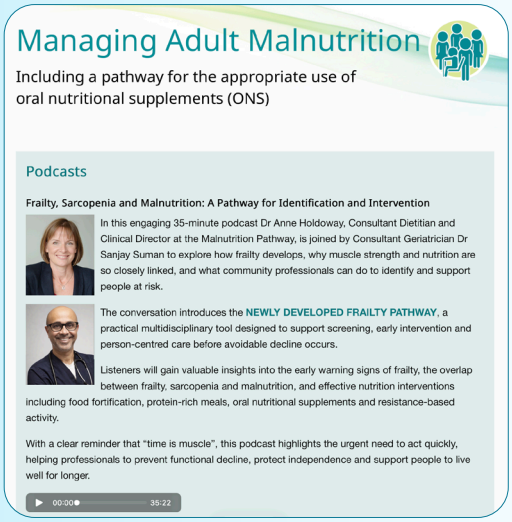
STEP 1: Nutritional screening
Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST):
- BMI 18.5- 19.9kg/m² – Score 1
- Unplanned weight loss >10% - Score 2
- Acute disease effect – Score 0 (rarely applies outside of hospital)
- Total MUST score 3 (high risk of malnutrition)

STEP 2: Identify causes of malnutrition
- Breathlessness during meals and early satiety due to progression of COPD
- Possible COPD-related hypermetabolism
- Michael's underlying belief that weight loss in advanced age is normal (which prevented him seeking help sooner)

MALNUTRITION PATHWAY CASE STUDY SERIES #1 | MARCH 2026

1. **Community Nursing: Supporting an Older Adult with Unintentional Weight Loss**
   A district nurse identified an older adult experiencing gradual, unintentional weight loss and reduced appetite. By using the Malnutrition Pathway, the nurse implemented food fortification, encouraged protein-rich meals and arranged timely follow-up. The individual's weight stabilised, energy levels improved and independence was maintained.
   Key message: early recognition and simple dietary strategies can prevent avoidable decline.
2. **COPD Management: Improving Nutrition to Support Breathlessness and Function**
   A patient living with COPD was struggling with breathlessness, fatigue and reduced intake. Using the COPD-specific pathway, the clinician introduced small, frequent, high-protein meals and appropriate oral nutritional support. The patient reported improved strength, better symptom control and fewer exacerbations.
   Key message: tailored nutrition advice is essential in chronic respiratory disease.
3. **Post Hospital Discharge: Restoring Strength After Acute Illness**
   Following a hospital stay, an older adult returned home significantly deconditioned and at high risk of malnutrition. The GP and community team used the Malnutrition Pathway to guide ONS selection, support adherence and encourage gradual increases in activity. Over several weeks, the patient regained strength and confidence.
   Key message: timely nutrition intervention after discharge supports recovery and reduces readmission risk.
4. **Care Home Setting: Embedding Person-Centred Nutrition Support**
   A care home team used the Malnutrition Pathway to improve screening, documentation and personalised nutrition plans for residents at medium and high risk. Staff training, consistent monitoring and simple food-based strategies led to improved intake, fewer episodes of decline and better engagement from residents and families.
   Key message: structured, person-centred nutritional care enhances wellbeing in residential settings.

Explore the growing collection at: malnutritionpathway.co.uk/case-studies


Managing Adult Malnutrition
Including a pathway for the appropriate use of oral nutritional supplements (ONS)

Podcasts

Frailty, Sarcopenia and Malnutrition: A Pathway for Identification and Intervention

In this engaging 35-minute podcast Dr Anne Holdoway, Consultant Dietitian and Clinical Director at the Malnutrition Pathway, is joined by Consultant Geriatrician Dr Sanjay Suman to explore how frailty develops, why muscle strength and nutrition are so closely linked, and what community professionals can do to identify and support people at risk.

The conversation introduces the NEWLY DEVELOPED FRAILTY PATHWAY, a practical multidisciplinary tool designed to support screening, early intervention and person-centred care before avoidable decline occurs.

Listeners will gain valuable insights into the early warning signs of frailty, the overlap between frailty, sarcopenia and malnutrition, and effective nutrition interventions including food fortification, protein-rich meals, oral nutritional supplements and resistance-based activity.

With a clear reminder that "time is muscle", this podcast highlights the urgent need to act quickly, helping professionals to prevent functional decline, protect independence and support people to live well for longer.

00:00 35:22

PODCAST:
FRAILTY, SARCOPENIA AND MALNUTRITION – TIME IS MUSCLE

To support the adoption of the frailty pathway we've created a 35 minute podcast. Featuring Malnutrition Pathway Clinical Director, Dr Anne Holdoway, in conversation with Consultant Geriatrician, Dr Sanjay Suman, the podcast explores how frailty develops, why nutrition and muscle strength matter and walks listeners through the pathway and tools designed to help community professionals to identify and support those at risk and prevent irreversible loss of muscle.

Listen and access the podcast at malnutritionpathway.co.uk/videos.

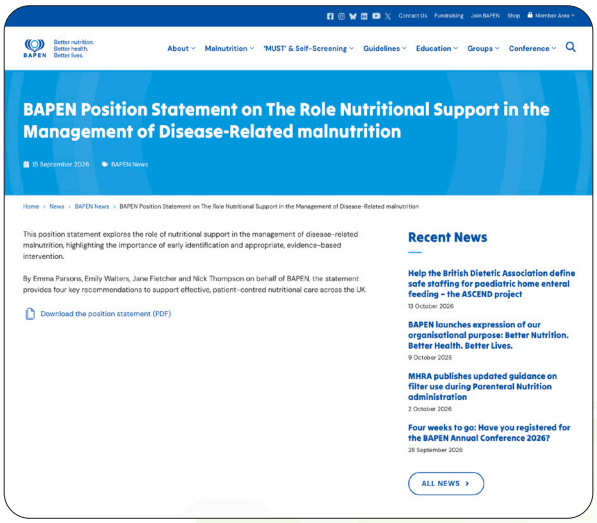
UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES RELATING TO MALNUTRITION

BAPEN POSITION STATEMENT: ADVOCATING FOR THE ROLE OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT IN DISEASE-RELATED MALNUTRITION

The British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN) has published a new Position Statement reinforcing the importance of structured, evidence-based nutritional support for people living with disease-related malnutrition.

Reflecting the process and aims of the Malnutrition Pathway, the Position Statement encourages early identification, timely intervention proportionate to the severity of malnutrition and aligned with the individual's clinical condition and treatment goals, with regular review across care settings and appropriate escalation and proactive use of nutritional support.

The statement stresses the importance of optimising oral intake through everyday foods and tailored dietary advice, including meal enrichment to increase energy and protein intake. However, it also calls for the use of oral nutritional supplements (ONS) for people with established undernutrition, or significantly increased nutritional requirements, drawing on the significant evidence base demonstrating how ONS can improve clinical outcomes and deliver cost benefits.



The statement also urges healthcare professionals and system leaders to establish clear criteria for initiating and reviewing nutritional support and address post-discharge needs which includes timely review, the continued need for dietary modifications and the use of ONS as an effective component of care to treat moderate to severe undernutrition.

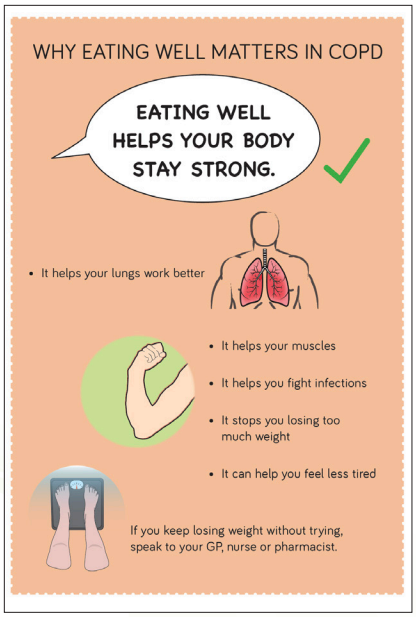
The full Position Statement is available on the BAPEN website:

bapen.org.uk/bapen-news/bapen-position-statement-on-the-role-nutritional-support-in-the-management-of-disease-related-malnutrition

EASY READ RESOURCES – MAKING MALNUTRITION ADVICE ACCESSIBLE

We are developing a suite of Easy Read malnutrition resources to support individuals with learning disabilities and low literacy - groups known to be at greater risk of malnutrition and who face significant barriers when accessing standard written health information. The project adapts seven existing Malnutrition Pathway leaflets into Easy Read formats, including core malnutrition risk leaflets, COPD nutrition leaflets and our protein leaflet.





The work is being delivered through a BAPEN funded project and follows a co-production model involving professionals specialising in learning disabilities, accessible communication and inclusive design. User testing is currently underway, and we extend our thanks to the professionals and community groups supporting this important phase. Once finalised, the Easy Read materials will be freely available on the Malnutrition Pathway website.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

BAPEN ANNUAL CONFERENCE:
10-11 NOVEMBER 2026, BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

The 2026 BAPEN conference will bring together professionals from across acute, community and home nutrition services, with a programme covering key areas relevant to community practice. Sessions will include:

- Collaborative care pathways to support complex discharges and strengthen MDT working between hospital and community teams
- Enteral tube feeding in the community, including blended diets, medication optimisation and safety considerations for jejunal, nasogastric and gastrostomy feeding
- Sarcopenia and muscle health, with updates on emerging evidence, diagnostic tools and implications for older adults living with frailty
- Intestinal failure, including rehabilitation, transplant updates and management of complications such as IFALD, renal issues and metabolic bone disease
- Digital innovation and malnutrition care, with sessions on the 'MUST' refresh, 'MUST plus', and future digital tools
- Research and quality improvement, showcasing national surveys, case studies and projects focused on improving nutritional safety and outcomes

AWARENESS WEEKS:
CELEBRATING NUTRITION AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

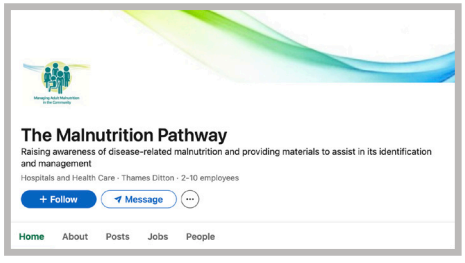
This year's Nutrition & Hydration Week and Dietitians Week have provided valuable opportunities to highlight the importance of good nutrition, hydration and professional leadership in preventing avoidable decline.

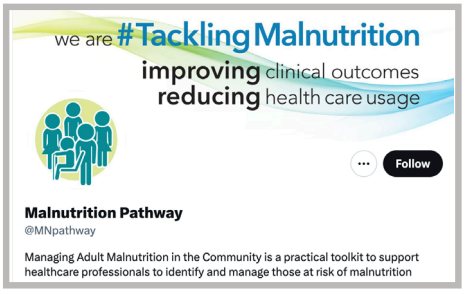
With the UK Malnutrition Awareness Week approaching (16-20 November), we hope professionals will join us and others in sharing resources, case studies and practical tools to support early identification and intervention across community settings. These awareness weeks reinforce key messages:

- Malnutrition is common, preventable and treatable
- Early action protects independence
- Nutrition and muscle strength matter at every stage of ageing
- Multidisciplinary working is essential to effective care

UK MALNUTRITION AWARENESS WEEK

#UKMAW2026





THE MALNUTRITION PATHWAY

The Malnutrition Pathway is a Community Interest Company. We are a not-for-profit company which invests all funding generated into activities to raise awareness of malnutrition arising from disease and chronic conditions.

Our aim is to ensure health and care professionals, patients and their families, are empowered to take timely action to diagnose, treat and prevent malnutrition and improve health outcomes and quality of life. Our activities include the development of free educational resources for healthcare professionals and patients, attendance at educational events and writing educational features for professional journals.

Our thanks to those commercial companies who have enabled us to fund initiatives via unrestricted educational grants. Thanks to Nutricia for sponsoring this issue of the Pathway newsletter.

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