

# Caring For Your Nutrition: Get the Facts

When your body does not get the right balance of energy and nutrients that it needs, you may become malnourished. **Malnutrition** is in this case considered undernutrition. **Malnutrition threatens your health and your ability to fight sickness and injuries.**

## KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Malnutrition is not always easy to see, so it is important to keep an eye out for possible signs that you may be malnourished. The major signs of malnutrition include:

 <p>Sudden unexpected weight loss</p>	 <p>Loss of appetite</p>	 <p>Muscle weakness</p>	 <p>Frequent nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea</p>
 <p>Slow-healing wounds</p>	 <p>Feeling tired or fatigued</p>	 <p>Swelling in your ankles, legs, or belly</p>	 <p>Getting sick often</p>

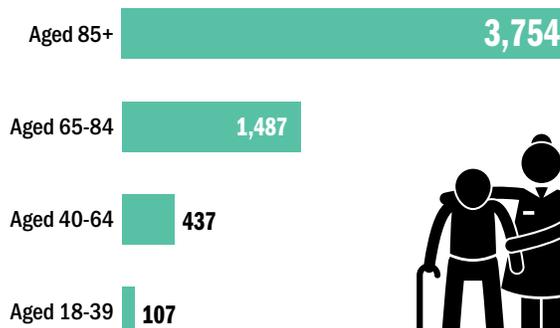
You may be at a greater risk for malnutrition if you suffer from a chronic health condition, such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or dementia.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Malnutrition is a serious issue that can have dangerous consequences on your well-being. The effects of malnutrition in older adults include:

 <p>Higher risk of falls and broken bones</p>	 <p>Less independence</p>
 <p>Higher stress levels</p>	 <p>Higher risk of infections</p>
 <p>Longer and more frequent hospital stays</p>	 <p>Higher death risk</p>

### Protein-Calorie Malnutrition Related Hospital Stays Per 100,000 Population



Rate of malnutrition is highest in older adults

Barrett ML, Bailey MK, Owens PL. Non-maternal and Non-neonatal Inpatient Stays in the United States involving malnutrition, 2016. U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. [www.hcupus.ahrq.gov/reports.jsp](http://www.hcupus.ahrq.gov/reports.jsp).

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO? TIPS FOR GOOD NUTRITION

The good news is that malnutrition can be prevented and treated through a healthy diet and lifestyle. Below are some tips to help you stay healthy and meet your nutritional needs.

- i** Buy foods that are tasty, **easy to prepare**, and **rich in calories and protein**. Examples of high-protein foods include **milk, beans, meat, and eggs**. Try adding **herbs and spices** into your meals to make them more interesting.



- i** **Make your meals social!** Ask family or friends to eat with you. Go out to restaurants that offer senior discounts.



- i** **Eat 5-6 small meals a day** instead of 3 large meals.
- i** **Build muscles and strength** by lifting weights, using resistance bands, or taking walks.

- i** Find an **oral nutrition supplement** that you like. Oral nutrition supplements are an easy way to get in the **calories, protein, and essential nutrients** that your body needs. Look for oral nutrition supplements that provide **at least 150 calories and 15-30 grams of protein per 8 ounces**. Oral nutrition supplements can be purchased at the grocery store, pharmacy, or ordered online from various manufacturers.

You can also prepare your own shake or smoothie. The following is an example of such a recipe that is high in calories and protein.



### Creamy Peach Smoothie

1 Cup vanilla ice cream

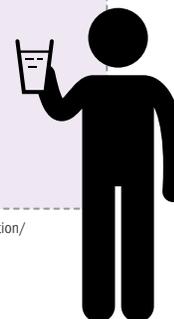
½ Cup whole milk

1 Peach

Calories: 435

Protein: 11 g

Carbohydrates: 51 g



Recipe from <http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/Nutrition/HighCalorieShakeandSmoothieRecipes.pdf>

*If you think you might be malnourished, speak with your healthcare provider. They can perform a nutrition screening and provide suggestions to help you as needed.*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about malnutrition and what you can do to fight it by visiting the ASPEN Malnutrition Solution Center at [nutritioncare.org/malnutrition](http://nutritioncare.org/malnutrition).