Whether the patient is in the inpatient or outpatient setting, nutrition clinicians have been challenged by the pandemic to perform nutrition assessments via telehealth. The purpose of this fact sheet is to review in-person and remote nutrition assessments including data collection methods, adapted nutrition-focused physical exam, and practical tips to overcome challenges in providing a high-quality nutrition assessment via telehealth.

**Barriers to Telehealth Nutrition Assessment**

**Issues for Inpatient Care**
- With limited nutrition staff in institution, dependence on nursing or medical staff to help gather information.
- Inability to participate in team rounds.
- Lack of access to facility resources for documentation and entering orders remotely.

**Issues for Outpatient Care**
- Increased reliance on patient participation.
- Lack of ability to palpate the patient.
- Challenges with technology include visibility/quality, connection failures, and patient comfort with technology.

**Data Collection Methods: In-Person vs. Remote**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Assessment Data</th>
<th>In-Person Data Collection</th>
<th>Remote Data Collection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and nutrient intake/administration</td>
<td>Medical record review</td>
<td>Patient interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition quality of life</td>
<td>Patient interview</td>
<td>Patient interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity</td>
<td>Patient interview</td>
<td>Patient interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional status</td>
<td>Digital activity log</td>
<td>Digital activity log</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition-related medications, labs, tests</td>
<td>Medical record review</td>
<td>Measurements taken in clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition and food-related knowledge, beliefs, attitudes; stage of change</td>
<td>Patient interview</td>
<td>Observation of non-verbal cues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropometric data (height, weight, weight history, etc.)</td>
<td>Medical record review</td>
<td>Measurements taken in clinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated nutrient needs</td>
<td>Indirect calorimetry</td>
<td>Calculation using predictive equation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>KEY TAKEAWAY MESSAGES</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage patient participation as much as possible by using technology.</td>
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<td>Ask specific questions to assess factors that you might not be able to observe.</td>
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<td>Engage with patient and/or hospital staff to maximize communication.</td>
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</table>

**Pre-Visit Considerations**

- Test audio and video prior to the visit
- Ensure your desktop or laptop has a high-quality camera (avoid smartphones)
- Set your camera at eye level
- Have adequate lighting
- Find a private location for the visit
- Silence your phone prior to starting
- Use a second screen to write notes/complete internet searches

Continues on next page
## Considerations During Visit
- Look directly at the camera
- Minimize background noise; wear headphones and use a microphone
- Confirm with the patient that they can see and hear you at the start of the visit
- Obtain verbal, informed consent from the patient before delivering telehealth services and document the consent

## Post-Visit Considerations
- Documentation needs to be clear that the visit is a telehealth visit
- If multiple people were on the videoconference, document who provided answers to questions
- If applicable, send the patient a follow-up message with visit summary, requested handouts, and/or reminders for patient images for documentation/monitoring and evaluation

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### Nutrition-Focused Physical Examination (NFPE) Adaptations for Telehealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NFPE Component</th>
<th>Clinician Assessment Actions</th>
<th>Questions to Ask Patient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Functional status       | • Observe posture/position/physique<br>
                        | • Notice if patient is sitting/lying in bed, if able to maintain posture                    | • Do you notice any signs of weakness?<br>
                        | • Notice if patient is sitting/lying in bed, if able to maintain posture                    | • Has your activity level changed? If so, how?<br>
                        | • Notice if patient is sitting/lying in bed, if able to maintain posture                    | • Ask about activities of daily living/time spent on activities                            |
| Fat and muscle wasting  | • Notice visible losses of fat or muscle<br>
                        | • Guide patient to show each area of body<br>
                        | • Explain positioning<br>
                        | • Consider asking for photos for monitoring and follow-up evaluation                    | • Have you noticed any changes in weight?<br>
                        | • Guide patient to show each area of body<br>
                        | • Explain positioning<br>
                        | • Consider asking for photos for monitoring and follow-up evaluation                    | • Does your face appear thinner? Suggest patient look back at recent photos for changes|
| Fluid status            | • Teach patient how to assess quality of edema<br>
                        | • Teach patient skin turgor assessment (back of hand, forearm, sternum)                 | • Have you noticed any increase in puffiness/fluid accumulation in your ankles/around your feet?<br>
                        | • Teach patient how to assess quality of edema<br>
                        | • Teach patient skin turgor assessment (back of hand, forearm, sternum)                 | • How far up your leg does swelling occur?<br>
                        | • Teach patient how to assess quality of edema<br>
                        | • Teach patient skin turgor assessment (back of hand, forearm, sternum)                 | • Is there indentation when you press on your skin? How long does the indentation last?<br>
                        | • Teach patient how to assess quality of edema<br>
                        | • Teach patient skin turgor assessment (back of hand, forearm, sternum)                 | • Pinch skin; after letting go, does the skin return to its original position? How long does it take?|
| Micronutrients: skin    | • Observe facial skin, notice any discoloration, rashes, or poor pallor                   | • Have you noticed any rashes or changes in your skin, areas of flaky skin, redness, wounds?<br>
| Micronutrients: hair    | • Observe hair; ask to see arm hair                                                       | • Have you noticed any difference in your hair?<br>
                        | • Observe hair; ask to see arm hair                                                       | • Has your hair been falling out more? Are you waking up with hair on your pillow?<br>
| Micronutrients: nails   | • Ask to see nails up close on camera<br>
                        | • Ask patient to push on nail bed to demonstrate blanching                               | • Does arm hair look like a corkscrew?<br>
| Micronutrients: eyes    | • Observe eyes<br>
                        | • Ask patient to lighty pull down on bottom eyelid to assess conjunctiva color           | • Have you noticed any differences in eye health or color?<br>
| Micronutrients: mouth   | • Observe mouth and lips<br>
                        | • Ask to see tongue, inner bottom lip, and gums                                          | • Have you had any trouble seeing in general or seeing at night?<br>
                        | • Observe mouth and lips<br>
                        | • Ask to see tongue, inner bottom lip, and gums                                          | • Are you experiencing dry, stinging, or burning eyes?<br>

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References:

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**Watch Related Videos on nutritioncare.org/Malnutrition**

- Performing Nutrition Assessment Remotely Using Telehealth: A Focus on the Outpatient Setting
- A Focus on the Inpatient Setting