

DOCUMENTATION BULLETIN

MALNUTRITION

Malnutrition is one of the most prevalent comorbidities seen in patients admitted to hospitals and is also one of the most frequently underdocumented

Patients who suffer from malnutrition take longer to get well and require more intense medical resources. Documenting malnutrition or severe malnutrition demonstrates care for a sicker patient

Suspect malnutrition in the presence of these risk factors:

1. Poor eating habits
2. Loss of teeth and/or mouth pain
3. Economic hardship / poverty
4. Social isolation / dependency
5. Chronic diseases with multiple medications
6. Cancer patients with poor appetite
7. Extremes of age – especially over 75
8. Involuntary weight loss or gain (obese persons can be malnourished)
9. Nutritional disorders such as osteoporosis, osteomalacia, or anemias due to iron folate or B₁₂ deficiencies

Malnutrition: Serum albumin 2.1-2.7 and/or pre-albumin 10-15

Severe malnutrition: Serum albumin <2.1 and/or pre-albumin <10.0

If you suspect malnutrition:

- 1. order a serum pre-albumin level***
- 2. order a dietary / nutrition consult***