

Hospital Patients Are Leaving Their Plates Half Full and It's Putting Their Lives at Risk, Study Shows

- The largest analysis to date of U.S. hospital malnutrition prevalence confirms 1 in 3 adults are at risk
- Majority of patients eat only half of their plates or less, which is linked to greater risk of death
- Nutrition care is significantly underutilized in hospitals, and it could greatly improve patients' health

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., January 29, 2019 — For the 36 million Americans hospitalized each year,ⁱ adequate nutrition plays a critical role in their health and recovery. Yet research from nutritionDay in the U.S., in collaboration with Abbott, shows malnutrition is still an unaddressed and widespread problem in hospitals. The study, published in *The Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*, is the most robust analysis of malnutrition in the U.S. to date. The data confirmed 1 in 3 hospitalized adults are at risk of malnutrition and showed patients' subpar food intake is putting their health and lives at risk too, reaffirming the need to focus on nutrition.ⁱⁱ

Using data from nutritionDay – an organization that leads a one-day survey of nutritional factors and food intake in hospitalized adult patients – the researchers looked at nearly 10,000 patients from 245 U.S. hospitals. They assessed the prevalence of malnutrition risk and the impact of food intake, and found:

- Fifty-one percent of patients are eating half or less of their meals, and diminished food intake is linked to higher risk of death.
- Adults who ate none of their food had a nearly six times higher risk of death than those who ate some food.
- Among patients who were allowed to eat but ate nothing, only 11 percent received a nutrition supplement.
- Nearly half of infectious disease and long-term care patients and more than 40 percent of oncology patients were at risk of malnutrition.

"Malnutrition can be invisible to the eye and is rampant in U.S. hospitals because it's not always top of mind – symptoms, like decreased energy and unintentional weight loss, can often be attributed to a patient's primary diagnosis," said Gail Gewirtz, M.S., R.D., president and founder of nutritionDay in the U.S. "However, our data shows that one warning sign – poor food intake – is very common in hospitals, and this is something healthcare providers can easily look out for and address."

HELPING PATIENTS CLEAN THEIR PLATES

Malnutrition occurs when the body doesn't get the nutrients it needs and can happen in both underweight and overweight individuals. Malnutrition can increase patients' risk of complications and delay recovery. Often patients arrive to the hospital either malnourished or at risk, and poor food intake while hospitalized can cause further complications and delay recovery.

--- more ---

"Patients don't always have the best appetite or desire to eat while in the hospital, so it's important to create an environment and serve up options that promote optimal food intake," said Abby Sauer, M.P.H., R.D., a registered dietitian at Abbott and lead study author. "Numerous studies confirm that nutrition care, including a supplemental nutrition drink, can help malnourished patients and those at risk get the nutrients and energy they need to avoid complications, recover and get out of the hospital faster."

Steps can be taken by healthcare providers, caregivers and patients to reverse the malnutrition trend:

- **Lend a hand:** Offer assistance to patients with limited mobility or other impairments – open packages, prepare eating utensils and remove unpleasant items that may interfere with the patient's desire to eat.
- **Have a back-up plan:** Confirm the healthcare facility has alternate food or nutrition options available during foodservice off-hours or if the patient is away during meal times.
- **Team up with an expert:** Recommend a consultation with a registered dietitian nutritionist for patients with limited appetites, specific nutrition needs or risk factors.
- **Add a supplement:** Provide nutrition drinks to patients who are malnourished, have poor meal intake or those struggling with solid foods.
- **Be your own nutrition advocate:** Talk with your healthcare professional about your nutrition needs and ask to speak with a dietitian to make sure you are getting proper nutrition while in the hospital and post-discharge.

For more information on malnutrition and tips for staying nourished, visit [Abbott's Nutrition Newsroom](#).

About the Study

Prevalence of Malnutrition Risk and the Impact of Nutrition Risk on Hospital Outcomes: Results From nutritionDay in the U.S. published online in [The Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition](#). The study aimed to determine the prevalence of malnutrition risk and to evaluate the impact of food intake on mortality. It analyzed data from nutritionDay in the U.S. on adult patients collected from 245 hospitals across the U.S. from 2009 through 2015. Prevalence of malnutrition risk was assessed by mapping self-reported survey questions to the Malnutrition Screening Tool (MST), the gold standard for evaluating malnutrition, and identifying patients with an MST score of two or higher as being at risk of malnutrition. Researchers also evaluated the impact of nutrition risk and food intake on patients' 30-day mortality, while controlling for age, mobility, and other disease related factors.

About nutritionDay

nutritionDay in the U.S. is a non-profit organization formed as part of a global initiative, [nutritionDay Worldwide](#) which is a one-day, cross sectional survey of nutritional factors and food intake in hospitalized patients conducted voluntarily by healthcare professionals. The data includes both self-reported patient data on food intake and appetite, as well as patient outcome and nutritional process data. Since its beginning in 2006, nutritionDay worldwide has collected data from more than 236,000 patients worldwide, including hospital, ICU and nursing homes patients. nutritionDay Worldwide was developed and is run by the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) with the support of the Austrian Society of Clinical Nutrition (AKE) and the Medical University of Vienna.

About Abbott

Abbott is a global healthcare leader that helps people live more fully at all stages of life. Our portfolio of life-changing technologies spans the spectrum of healthcare, with leading businesses and products in diagnostics, medical devices, nutritionals and branded generic medicines. Our 103,000 colleagues serve people in more than 160 countries.

Connect with us at www.abbott.com, on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/abbott-/, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Abbott and on Twitter @AbbottNews and @AbbottGlobal.

Abbott Media:

Abbott: Rachel Bassler, 224 668 6064

###

ⁱ [American Hospital Association. AHA Hospital Statistics. 2019 Edition](#)

ⁱⁱ Sauer, AC, et al. *JPEN J Parenter Enter.* 2019 Jan 22;e-pub ahead of print.