

Nutrition Is the Missing Ingredient in Home Health Today, New Study Shows

- Real-world data from Advocate Health Care and Abbott shows prioritizing nutrition care for home health patients helped keep them out of the hospital
- Improved health outcomes from nutrition intervention and educational support could help save millions of dollars in healthcare costs annually

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., June 24, 2019— New research from Advocate Health Care and Abbott found that prioritizing nutrition care* for home health patients at risk for malnutrition had a dramatic impact on helping keep them out of the hospital - resulting in millions of dollars in healthcare cost savings. Nearly 5 million Americans annually rely on home healthcare to recover from an illness, injury or hospitalization.^{1,†} While healthcare providers are constantly striving to improve patients' health and minimize hospitalizations, nutrition is often not top of mind, yet it plays a critical role in helping adults bounce back and resume their normal routine.

In the first-of-its-kind study, published today in the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*, more than 1,500 home health patients were followed for 90 days.² The study found that when patients at risk for malnutrition received a comprehensive nutrition care program, including nutrition drinks, to aid in their recovery:

- **Risk of being hospitalized was significantly reduced by 24% in the first 30 days, nearly 23% after 60 days, and 18% after 90 days.**
- **Healthcare costs were reduced by more than \$2.3 million or about \$1,500 per patient at risk for malnutrition treated over the course of 90 days.[‡]**

"Our goal as a home healthcare provider is to help patients get back on their feet as quickly as possible and to keep them out of the hospital," said Katie Riley, R.N., vice president, post acute chief nursing officer for Advocate Aurora Health and the lead study author. "While the primary reason people come to home health isn't because they're malnourished or at risk, we have found that when we do pay attention to their nutrition care, it helps promote their strength and prevents them from going back to the hospital, which ultimately reduces healthcare costs."

A RECIPE FOR RECOVERY

As many as 1 in 3 home health patients are at risk of malnutrition, which can impact their recovery or cause further health issues.^{1,3} But malnutrition often goes unrecognized as it can be invisible to the eye and can occur in both underweight and overweight individuals. Therefore, more healthcare systems are starting to focus efforts on the identification and management of malnourished or at-risk patients through regular monitoring and follow up.

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"It's clear that nutrition can be a simple, cost-effective tool to improve patient outcomes," said Suela Sulo, Ph.D., health outcomes researcher at Abbott and a study author. "Healthcare systems are driven to improve patient care while reducing costs. Our research shows that prioritizing nutrition across different settings of care – or from hospital to home – can significantly cut costs while improving patients' health."

While home health often helps jumpstart the road to recovery, it's even more effective when patients are given the necessary nutrition education and tools to take their health by the reins, even after they stop receiving visits from clinicians.

"Educating people on the benefits of proper nutritional care can empower them to continue thinking about their nutrition and drinking their supplements," said Gretchen VanDerBosch, R.D., a lead registered dietitian at Advocate Health Care and a study author. "By maintaining proper nutrition, patients have greater strength, heal faster, have fewer falls and reduced readmissions."

To learn more about malnutrition and tips for how to stay nourished at home, visit [Abbott's Nutrition Newsroom](#).

About the Study

Reducing hospitalizations and costs using nutrition care: results of a quality improvement program was published online in the [Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition](#). The study followed 1,546 adult patients at risk of malnutrition over a 90-day period who were recently enrolled in home health as a result of a hospitalization or a referral from a primary care physician or skilled nursing facility. The study evaluated the effect of a nutrition-focused quality improvement program, including oral nutritional supplements, on hospitalization rates and healthcare costs within 90 days of home health enrollment. The study was funded by Abbott, but the company had no role in data collection or analysis. A 30-day supply of Abbott's nutrition drinks including [Ensure](#)[®], [Glucerna](#)[®] or [Nepro](#)[®] was provided to patients enrolled in the study.

As part of a multi-year partnership with Advocate Health Care, Abbott has studied the impact of optimizing nutrition care on patients' health and hospital resource utilization across the care continuum. In a previous study published in the [Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition](#), Advocate Health Care and Abbott found implementing a nutrition care program in the hospital helped reduce 30-day readmission rates and length of stay for malnourished and at-risk patients. A second article published in [American Health & Drug Benefits](#) found that the same hospital nutrition care program led to \$4.8 million in savings (or \$3,800 per patient savings) due to shorter hospital stays and lower readmission rates.

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About Advocate Health Care

Advocate Health Care is the largest health system in Illinois and one of the largest accountable care organizations in the country. Advocate Research Institute supports research across the health system. Recognized for its clinical leaders, top hospitals and many sites of care, Advocate has become an important partner to advance population health and conduct clinical trials of innovative drugs and devices. Enhancing patient health and quality of life remains at the forefront of Advocate research and drives our researchers to evaluate best care practices, improve patient outcomes and offer state-of-the-art treatment options to the patients we serve. Advocate is part of Advocate Aurora Health, one of the top 10 largest not-for-profit, integrated health systems in the United States. We help people live well.

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.

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¹ Harris-Kojetin L, et al. *Vital Health Stat* 3.2016;3(38):1-105.

² Riley K, et al. *JPEN J Parenter Enter*. 2019; e-pub ahead of print.

³ Bayada Nurses, Abbott Nutrition. *ANHI.org*. 2013.

* Prioritizing nutrition care refers to adding a nutrition quality improvement program to screen for malnutrition, treat patients found to be at risk and follow them throughout their hospital stay.

† Home healthcare is medical care provided by clinicians in a patient's home.

‡ Healthcare costs include costs associated with hospitalizations (admissions and readmissions), emergency department visits and outpatient clinic visits.