



From Causes to Consequences: Understanding the Nature of Malnutrition

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Description

Malnutrition is a condition that occurs when there is an imbalance between the nutrients that an individual needs and the nutrients they consume. It can occur due to inadequate intake, increased nutrient needs, or increased nutrient losses.

Diagnosis of malnutrition involves a comprehensive assessment of the individual's medical history, physical examination, and laboratory tests. Screening for malnutrition involves a quick evaluation of an individual's weight, height, and other anthropometric measures.

Assessment of malnutrition can be done using various methods, including anthropometry, biochemical assessment, clinical assessment, and dietary assessment.

Anthropometry involves the measurement of body weight, height, and other body dimensions. The measurements are then compared with age and gender-specific reference standards to determine if the individual is underweight, overweight, or obese.

Biochemical assessment involves the measurement of blood and urine samples to determine nutrient levels in the body. This method is particularly useful in identifying micronutrient deficiencies.

Clinical assessment involves a physical examination to identify physical signs and symptoms of malnutrition. These signs and symptoms may include muscle wasting, poor skin turgor, and edema.

Dietary assessment involves the evaluation of an individual's diet to determine the adequacy of nutrient intake. This method can be done through dietary recall, food frequency questionnaires, and 24-hour dietary intake assessments.

Overall, the diagnosis, screening, and assessment of malnutrition require a multidisciplinary approach involving healthcare professionals such as doctors, dietitians, and nurses. Early identification and intervention can prevent or mitigate the effects of malnutrition on an individual's health.

Symptoms of malnutrition

The symptoms of malnutrition can vary depending on the severity and duration of the condition, as well as the specific nutrient

deficiencies that are present. However, some common symptoms of malnutrition include:

- Weight loss or failure to gain weight (in children)
- Weakness and fatigue
- Poor immune function and increased susceptibility to infections
- Delayed wound healing
- Muscle wasting and weakness
- Dry and scaly skin, as well as brittle hair and nails
- Anemia
- Swollen or bleeding gums and tooth decay
- Mental confusion or disorientation
- Depression or anxiety
- Constipation or diarrhea

It's important to note that malnutrition can have long-term effects on an individual's physical and mental health. Therefore, it's essential to seek medical attention if they experience any of the symptoms mentioned above or suspect that they may be malnourished.

Effects of malnutrition

Malnutrition can have numerous negative effects on an individual's health and well-being. Some of the effects of malnutrition include:

- Impaired growth and development in children
- Increased risk of infections and illness
- Delayed wound healing
- Anemia
- Impaired cognitive function, memory, and learning abilities
- Increased risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders
- weakness, fatigue, and muscle wasting
- Increased risk of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer
- Nutrient deficiencies, which can cause specific health problems, such as night blindness due to vitamin A deficiency, or scurvy due to vitamin C deficiency.

Treatments of malnutrition

Nutritional support: This may involve providing nutrient-dense foods, dietary supplements, or specialized medical nutrition therapy to correct nutrient deficiencies.

Addressing underlying health conditions: Treating any underlying medical conditions that may be contributing to malnutrition, such as infections or gastrointestinal disorders.

Rehydration therapy: For individuals who are severely dehydrated, oral rehydration therapy or intravenous fluids may be necessary.

Medications: Certain medications may be prescribed to treat underlying conditions or to improve nutrient absorption.

Behavioral interventions: In some cases, individuals may need behavioral interventions, such as counseling or education, to improve their dietary habits and ensure adequate nutrient intake.

Monitoring and follow-up: Regular monitoring and follow-up are essential to ensure that the individual's nutrient needs are being met and that any underlying conditions are being effectively managed.

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