

Paediatric Nutrition Screening Tool

Instructions for use

The Paediatric Nutrition Screening Tool is intended to be used on hospital admission of paediatric patients. Complete the questions by obtaining information from parents or carers, medical records and by examining the child. Complete each question by selecting 'yes' or 'no' answers.

1 Has the child unintentionally lost weight lately?

This question identifies if the child has lost weight. Children should gain weight as they grow and only lose weight if clinically indicated. There are many causes of weight loss that require further investigation. 'Lately' can be over a time period of six months or days. If there is no weight history, a subjective assessment can be made as to whether the parent / carer / health professional is of the opinion that the child looks like they have lost weight.

2 Has the child had poor weight gain over the last few months?

The rate of weight gain of children depends on their age. Take into account the child's age when answering this question and refer to growth standards to determine if weight gain is appropriate.

3 Has the child been eating/feeding less in the last few weeks?

Determine if the child has reduced nutritional intake compared to their usual intake and energy requirements. Nutritional intake can be via various routes including oral, tube or parenteral. Reduced nutritional intake can occur as the result of malabsorption so consider gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting and loose stools.

4 Is the child obviously underweight?

Examine the child for physical indicators of malnutrition including loss of fat stores and muscle wasting. Look for loss of subcutaneous fat stores such as a hollow narrow face, obvious depressions between the ribs and flat buttocks. Protruding or prominent bones of the clavicle and scapular, depression along the inner thigh and a small calf are evidence of muscle wasting.

If 'yes' to two or more of the above:

- refer the child for further nutrition assessment (see contact details)
- check if child is known to a dietitian
- measure weight and length/height
- commence food and fluid intake record.

If a child does not require nutrition assessment it is important that they are rescreened regularly during their hospital stay. Rescreening should include regular weights and monitoring of nutritional intake. Rescreening questions can be:

1. Has the child unintentionally lost weight since admission?
2. Has the child reduced intake over the past three days?