



Spotlight on Boost Boxes & Patients Association Nutrition Checklist to Support Older People at Risk of Malnutrition while Self-isolating

Eat Well Age Well is a national project as part of the Food Train charity and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Eat Well Age Well has produced this spotlight brief to support essential staff who are supporting older people in the voluntary sector, and community groups to identify and support potential risk of malnutrition in the community. The information below gives a brief description of the Boost Box project and how it can be used and adapted during this crisis to support individuals while self-isolating who may be struggling with a poor appetite.

What is the Boost Box?

- Boost Box is a simple and innovative snack box
- Aims to boost calorie and protein intake for those who may be struggling with poor appetite
- The box contains 14 high protein, high calorie nutritious snacks to last one week
- Encourage 1-2 snacks a day alongside regular meal
- Store cupboard items which are easy and quick to snack e.g. rice pudding, fruit jellies, dried apricots, oatcakes, mini cheddars or mini swiss rolls.



Snack examples:



What is the Patient Nutrition Checklist

The [Patients Association Nutrition Checklist](#) is a paper-based tool to identify potential risk of malnutrition (as undernutrition) and offers guidance, advice and signposting on next steps. The checklist consists of two key parts; Section A asks four key questions around weight, unintentional weight loss and loss of appetite. If the individual answer yes or I don't know to any of the questions move on to section B-D. The checklist includes additional questions to focus on the reasons for risk of malnutrition and provides a framework for giving basic advice and signposting to services that can provide support.

the patients association nutrition checklist

STAFF: A guide for signs that someone you are supporting may need nutritional help or extra nourishment, and what to do next.

Name of individual: _____

Name of person completing this checklist: _____

Role: _____ Organisation: _____

Date of completion: _____

Section A: Initial assessment

Tick the relevant box to indicate the person's answers, then enter in the spaces below

1. Are you or your family concerned that you may be underweight or need nutritional advice?
 Yes No Don't know

2. Have you lost a lot of weight unintentionally in the past three - six months?
 Yes - do you know why? _____
 No Don't know

3. Have you noticed that your clothes or rings have become loose recently?
 Yes No Don't know

4. Have you recently found that you have lost your appetite and/or interest in eating?
 Yes No Don't know

Is the person at increased risk of undernutrition?
 Yes No Don't know

Has 100% of the person's energy per or been taken in the 4 weeks previous?
 Yes No Don't know

Further assessment & signposting advice needed: GO TO SECTION B, Add the person to the menu GP or _____

No further action needed

Who?

Eat Well Age Well have tested these tools with older people in the housing sector. Residents attended two information sessions which included using the checklist to identify those at risk of malnutrition. Those identified at risk were given a weekly Boost Box to be used alongside their regular meals. The idea was to focus on the benefits of having 1 to 2 snacks per day, especially if the older person was struggling with a poor appetite. In addition to receiving the Boost Box, residents also had weekly visits from a trained volunteer who would check in on their nutrition and well-being and provide any additional information needed on healthy eating or Food First advice.



Why?

Malnutrition is a significant threat as we age. Covid-19 pandemic will increase older peoples' vulnerability and the social isolation caused could impact on a person's access to food and variety of foods needed to keep them healthy. Staying at home for long periods may affect their appetite and may mean they would eat less and as a result could be at greater risk of malnutrition. Malnutrition can also increase the risk of frailty which can make people more vulnerable to infections, falls and needing extra care.

Boost Box during Covid-19

Many organisations have adapted to telephone support for welfare check-in calls to older people. This presents as a key opportunity to integrate the 4 key nutrition questions around potential risk of malnutrition (weight, unintentional weight loss and appetite) which would take 1-2 minutes to complete. If an individual answers yes or don't know to the 4 key nutrition questions, a Boost Box can be offered- During this current time, the snacks can be put into bags, if resources are limited.

The Boost Boxes or Boost Bags can be delivered to the older persons door, keeping in line with the government's guidelines regarding social distancing. Information leaflets can be included to give the older person further information on the Boost Box and how to store items. weekly home visits can be adapted to telephone calls to provide emotional wellbeing support, additional food first advice and to gather feedback on snacks.

NHS Tayside and Dundee Volunteer & Voluntary Action are working together to identify and prevent undernutrition across Dundee during this crisis:

"The Boost Boxes have been identified as a good opportunity to support our work. We are setting up a malnutrition advice line and screening individuals using the four questions in the Patient's Association Nutrition checklist. Those found to be at risk will be offered a

- Boost Box
- Signposting information to other services for example Food Train
- Check-in call after three weeks to access wellbeing/feedback on the boost box
- Opportunity for direct referral into dietetics if this was felt to be necessary"

Mia Gonzalez-Noda (Health Improvement Practitioner- NHS Tayside Nutrition and Dietetic Service)

Additional support: Please get in touch if you would like help, support and resources on developing this work in your area. Eat Well Age Well have free/downloadable resources to support older people. For example, [Eat Well: Guide for Older People in Scotland](#), this provides general guidance on healthy eating, hydration, cooking on a budget and contact numbers for key organisations. [Understanding Malnutrition and What You can Do?](#) provides further information on the signs and symptoms and food first advice for older people at risk of malnutrition.

For more information on creating your own Boost Box for older people please contact:
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[Watch our Boost Box video on YouTube](#)

