

# Protein-energy malnutrition

## What is protein-energy malnutrition?

This training focusses on protein-energy malnutrition. This type of malnutrition results from a person being unable to meet their protein and/or their energy needs. Older people may be more vulnerable to protein-energy malnutrition due to one or more of the following reasons:

- eating less
- increased nutrition needs
- less able to absorb foods.

### **Eating less**

There are a number of reasons why an older person may eat less, including:

- limited access to food
- cost of food
- social isolation
- loneliness
- limited cooking skills
- difficulty cooking (for example carrying heavy saucepans, opening packets or using sharp knives)
- difficulty feeding self
- problems chewing or swallowing
- reduced taste or smell
- less mobile (for example, trouble standing for periods of time).

### **Increased nutrition needs**

An older person may have lower energy needs than a younger person, but their nutrient needs are sometimes higher.

### **Less able to absorb foods**

The body is less able to absorb, make, or use some nutrients with age. This means older people need more nutrients. The use of medication can reduce absorption or increase losses of some nutrients.

# What does it affect?

Malnutrition can affect:

- body shape, size and composition (weight loss, muscle loss)
- the ability to move
- the ability to think clearly
- how the body recovers from illness or injury.