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Assessment of Nutrition in the Elderly

Malnutrition is a common problem in elderly persons. Its prevalence is about 5-10% in community –dwelling and 30-60% in acutely hospitalized or institutionalized elderly patients^{1,2}. It has been shown in many studies that malnutrition in elderly is associated with poor clinical outcomes and increased mortality^{3,4}. For that reason, screening for malnutrition in the elderly for early detection and intervention is essential.

Conventional methods that can be used to assess nutrition include measurement of the Patient's weight, body mass index, mid-arm or mid-calf circumference, triceps skin fold, nutritional intake, serum albumin, prealbumin, cholesterol, hemoglobin, and other blood tests. These conventional methods can be difficult and expensive. Many screening tools have been developed to assess nutrition in elderly patients. Some of these tools have been validated and have a very good sensitivity and specificity. In addition, most of these screening tools are inexpensive and can easily be used by health professionals^{5,6}.

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