

# OLDER RELATIVES AT RISK OF MALNUTRITION - HOW TO SPOT THE SIGNS AS FAMILIES GATHER THIS CHRISTMAS

-- New survey\* reveals 88 percent of adults in the UK cannot correctly identify the three most common signs of malnutrition<sup>[1]</sup>.

-- Abbott launches new I-CARE Checklist, supported by the Patients Association, to help easy identification of symptoms.

LONDON, Dec. 16, 2014 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- As families gather over the festive season and feast over Christmas dinner, healthcare company Abbott (NYSE: ABT) warns of the need to be vigilant about poor eating and malnutrition in our older relatives. The warning comes as new research conducted on behalf of Abbott by YouGov reveals that, worryingly, only 12 percent of people correctly identified the three commonly recognised symptoms of malnutrition, compared with 48 percent who were able to correctly identify heart attack symptoms and 71 percent correctly identifying stroke symptoms.<sup>[1]</sup>

Yet, with one in ten over 65s malnourished or showing signs of malnutrition<sup>[2]</sup>, it should be one of our top priorities. Supported by the Patients Association, Abbott today launches the I-CARE Checklist providing families with an easy checklist of signs to be vigilant about.

It may be that you don't see relatives very often – 38 percent of those with an older relative (aged 65+) see them every three months or less<sup>[1]</sup>, but Christmas is often a time when families do come together and therefore a time when you may notice some of the signs covered in **The I-CARE Checklist**:

**I** – I will check **C**lothing, **A**ppetite, **R**ings, **E**nergy levels.

**CLOTHING** - weight loss can be a sign of malnutrition, so look at clothing. Is it loose, ill-fitting? This could be a sign your relative is not eating enough.

**APPETITE**- again loss of appetite is key. There will be bundles of food on the Christmas table, but are they eating? Has their appetite shrunk? With weight loss, dentures can become loose and ill-fitting making it harder to eat, so watch out for this too.

**RINGS** - jewellery can often become ill-fitting with weight loss, so keep an eye on items such as wedding rings that people may have worn for years suddenly becoming loose.

**ENERGY** - with lack of food, reduced appetite and weight loss can also come a lack of energy. Does your relative seem more lethargic or struggle to keep up in a way they never used to?

Commenting on the I-CARE Checklist, Katherine Murphy, Chief Executive of the Patients Association said "The Patients Association warmly supports Abbott's initiative to raise public awareness of malnutrition at this time of year. With families getting together for Christmas, it's an ideal opportunity to identify early signs that things may not be quite right. The I-CARE checklist is a useful, practical tool to help people spot the signs and symptoms of malnutrition in their older relatives. It may help provide that early warning sign so people can take action and speak to their GP."

"The consequences of malnutrition are serious and should not be overlooked," says Carole Glencorse, Medical Director, Abbott Nutrition UK. She adds: "Malnourished older adults are less able to fight off infection, wounds take longer to heal and people lose muscle, leading to inactivity and an increased risk of falls. People who are malnourished are also more likely to visit their GP more frequently and be hospitalised. It's important that we spot the signs early so that people receive the appropriate treatment. We hope that the I-CARE Checklist will help both raise awareness of the symptoms of malnutrition and encourage people to take action if they're concerned about an older relative."

The research shows a surprisingly low number (only 15 percent) of Brits with an older relative are worried that they are not eating well or enough.<sup>[1]</sup> In contrast, people are overwhelmingly more concerned about poor health/diseases (48 percent) and mobility (34 percent)<sup>[1]</sup>, suggesting that the link between good nutrition and overall health, wellbeing and mobility is not well recognised or understood.

So think I-CARE this Christmas. The good news is that once people are aware of the problem, often simple measures to increase food intake, with or without nutritional supplements, may be enough to reverse the downward cycle and get people back on their feet.<sup>[3]</sup>

To download the I-CARE Checklist, visit [abbottnutrition.co.uk](http://abbottnutrition.co.uk) and click on I-CARE under 'Popular topics'.

## References

[1.] Data on file. Abbott Laboratories Ltd., 2014 (Omnibus survey: malnutrition).

[2.] BAPEN, 2013: <http://www.bapen.org.uk/professionals/publications-and-resources/bapen-reports/combating->

[malnutrition-recommendations-for-action/20-professionals/publications-and-resources/174-malnutrition-among-older-people-in-the-community](#) Accessed 28th November 2014

[3.] BAPEN, 2012: <http://www.bapen.org.uk/about-malnutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition?showall=&start=6> Accessed 28th November 2014.

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\*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,011 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 1st - 2nd December 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Respondents were presented with a list of symptoms for each medical condition, and three of them were the commonly recognised symptoms (i.e. 'correct'). Therefore, these statistics refer to respondents who only selected all these three symptoms.

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