

HEALTH

Education

What is Malnutrition?

Malnutrition is a term we often associate with seeing underweight individuals. However, malnutrition can also be associated with being overweight or simply not getting the proper nutrients and minerals from food. In the world, 1.9 billion people are overweight, while 462 million are underweight. In this article we'll look at the two main types of malnutrition as well as the signs and symptoms.

Undernutrition

There are various aspects that make up undernutrition. These include stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals).

In the U.S. symptoms of undernutrition include:

- lack of appetite or interest in food or drink
- tiredness and irritability
- inability to concentrate
- always feeling cold
- loss of fat, muscle mass, and body tissue
- higher risk of getting sick and taking longer to heal
- longer healing time for wounds
- higher risk of complications after surgery
- Depression

Overnutrition

This is the overconsumption of nutrients and food to a point when health is adversely affected. Overnutrition can lead to obesity which can ultimately lead to other diseases. Overconsuming certain nutrients can also put the body at risk for toxicity or future problems.

In the U.S. symptoms of overnutrition include:

- Fatigue
- Muscle and joint pain
- High blood pressure
- Increased susceptibility to illness

When to see a doctor

Talk to your doctor if your BMI is below 18.5 or over 25. They can help you take steps to monitor your nutrition or weight and keep you on a healthy track. Malnutrition can be a difficult thing to combat, however there are also multiple community resources if you or anyone you know needs assistance.



References:

<http://www.uniteforsight.org/hunger/module4>

<http://www.who.int/features/qa/malnutrition/en>



From Corporate Fitness Works Team Leader, Jennifer Sabol