

SNAPSHOT

NCP Step 1: Nutrition Assessment

What is the purpose of nutrition assessment? The purpose is to obtain, verify, and interpret data needed to identify nutrition-related problems, their causes, and significance. It is an ongoing, nonlinear, dynamic process that involves initial data collection, but also continual reassessment and analysis of the patient/client's status compared to specified criteria. This contrasts with nutrition monitoring and evaluation data where food and nutrition professionals use similar, or even the same, data to determine changes in patient/client* behavior or nutritional status and the efficacy of nutrition intervention.

How does a food and nutrition professional determine where to obtain nutrition assessment data? It depends on the practice setting. For individuals, data can come directly from the patient/client through interview, observation and measurements, a medical record, and the referring health care provider. For population groups, data from surveys, administrative data sets, and epidemiological or research studies are used. A nutrition assessment matrix that links nutrition assessment parameters with nutrition diagnoses is available to assist practitioners in identifying nutrition diagnoses.

How are Nutrition Assessment data organized? In five categories:

Food/Nutrition-Related History	Anthropometric Measurements	Biochemical Data, Medical Tests, and Procedures	Nutrition-Focused Physical Findings	Client History
<i>Food and nutrient intake, food and nutrient administration, medication/herbal supplement use, knowledge/beliefs, food and supplies availability, physical activity, nutrition quality of life</i>	<i>Height, weight, body mass index (BMI), growth pattern indices/percentile ranks, and weight history</i>	<i>Lab data (e.g., electrolytes, glucose) and tests (e.g., gastric emptying time, resting metabolic rate)</i>	<i>Physical appearance, muscle and fat wasting, swallow function, appetite, and affect</i>	<i>Personal history, medical/health/family history, treatments and complementary/alternative medicine use, and social history</i>

What is done with the nutrition assessment data? Nutrition assessment data (indicators) are compared to criteria, relevant norms and standards, for interpretation and decision making. These may be national, institutional, or regulatory norms and standards. Nutrition assessment findings are documented in nutrition diagnosis statements and nutrition intervention goal setting.

Critical thinking during this step...

- Determining appropriate data to collect
- Determining the need for additional information
- Selecting assessment tools and procedures that match the situation
- Applying assessment tools in valid and reliable ways
- Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant data
- Distinguishing important from unimportant data
- Validating the data

Is there a standardized language or taxonomy for nutrition assessment? Yes. A standard taxonomy for nutrition assessment supports a consistent approach to the NCP and enhances communication and research. The terms for nutrition assessment and nutrition monitoring and evaluation are combined, because the data points are the same or related; however, the data purpose and use are distinct in these two steps.

Are food and nutrition professionals limited to the nutrition assessment data included in the matrix and used in the nutrition diagnoses? Nutrition assessment data listed in the nutrition diagnoses reference sheets are undergoing study and research to confirm (validate) which data are most relevant to specific nutrition diagnoses. However, proposals for additions or revisions can be submitted using the Procedure for Nutrition Controlled Vocabulary/Terminology Maintenance/Review available from the Academy.

Detailed information about this step can be found in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics's International Dietetics and Nutrition Terminology (IDNT) Reference Manual: Standardized Language for the Nutrition Care Process, Fourth Edition.

*Patient/client refers to individuals, groups, populations, family members, and/or caregivers.