Determining the Severity of Unintended Weight Loss

Interpreting the severity of unintended weight loss is one of several clinical characteristics that can be used to document and support a diagnosis of malnutrition. Because the presence and degree of inflammation determines the significance of any patient weight loss, first assess markers of inflammation such as an elevated* C-reactive protein (CRP), then refer to etiology-based malnutrition definition flowchart located at this link: Etiology-Based Malnutrition Definitions.[1]

> **Note:** Past interpretation of >10mg/L CRP has been used to indicate inflammation. However, further research will elucidate more specific markers for use.

Incorporating the information on inflammation with the table below determines the severity of the patient's unintended weight loss.

Interpretation of Weight Loss[2]

Time		Acute Illness or Injury (Major infection and surgery)		Chronic Illness (Lung, pancreatic and GI cancer, sarcopenic obesity and organ failure)		Social or Environmental Circumstances	
		Moderate Malnutrition	Severe Malnutrition	Moderate Malnutrition	Severe Malnutrition	Moderate Malnutrition	Severe Malnutrition
% Weight Loss Over Time	1 week	1-2	>2				
	1 month	5	>5	5	>5	5	>5
	3 months	7.5	>7.5	7.5	>7.5	7.5	>7.5
	6 months	-	-	10	>10	10	>10
	1 year	-	-	20	>20	20	>20

For the full list of clinical characteristics to diagnose malnutrition, click here.[2]

References

1. Jensen GL, Hsiao PY, Wheeler D. Adult nutrition assessment tutorial. *JPEN J Parenter Enteral Nutr.* 2012 May; 36 (3): 267-274. Epub 2012 Mar 8.
2. White JV, Guenter P, Jensen G, Malone A, Schofield M; Academy Malnutrition Work Group, A.S.P.E.N. Malnutrition Task Force, A.S.P.E.N. Board of Directors. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2012 May; 112 (5): 730-738. Epub 2012 Apr 25.