

# Nutrition Focused Physical Exam

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Transcript for [“Nutrition Focused Physical Exam” video \(6:36\)](#)

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS:** dietitian, evaluated, micronutrient deficiencies, patient, subcutaneous fat, muscle, weight loss, exam, edema, last month, examine, physical exam, nutrition, eyes, eat, nutrition supplements, mindful, fat stores, bone, complete

00:08

Narrator: The nutrition focused physical exam is essential to the identification of malnutrition. This video will demonstrate how to incorporate the physical exam into your nutrition assessment. We will be evaluating for loss of subcutaneous fat, muscle mass, as well as micronutrient deficiencies. This video will demonstrate an ideal scenario. Adjustments may need to be made, depending on the condition of each patient.

00:35

Janine: Good morning, Mrs. Jones. My name is Janine, I'm one of the dietitians at the hospital here.

Mrs. Jones: Good morning.

Janine: Your doctors wanted me to come by and speak with you regarding the weight loss that you had reported before coming into the hospital. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

00:48

Mrs. Jones: Sure. Well, I don't usually weigh myself, but over the last month or so, I've noticed that my clothes are getting baggy. And I've started to wear a belt which I never used to. I usually think my weight is about 115. But when they weighed me this morning, they told me it was 105. And that was a surprise.

01:09

Janine: Okay, so you're saying you think the weight loss occurred over about the last month?

Mrs. Jones: Yes.

Janine: Okay. And what do you think may have caused the weight loss?

01:17

Mrs. Jones: Well, I guess I've been eating a lot less than I normally do. But I also haven't been doing anything. I haven't been as active as I used to, so I thought I didn't need to eat as much.

01:30

Janine: I understand you have difficulty breathing. Have you been having more shortness of breath over the last month?

01:35

Mrs. Jones: I've been getting tired very easily with just about everything I do. Even eating. My daughter's been helping me to make meals. But with my appetite, I just haven't had the appetite to eat much.

01:49

Janine: Well, we'll definitely set you up with some nutrition supplements while you're here and then we'll create a nutrition plan for you at home. That way we can prevent any further weight loss. As part of my nutrition assessment, I complete a physical exam where I look at some different areas of fat and muscle to see if there's been any changes there. Also, look for any vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Would you be comfortable with me completing this exam today?

02:11

Mrs. Jones: Yes, that would be okay.

02:13

Janine: Okay, great, thank you.

02:15

Narrator: Here the dietitian will complete her head to toe exam, looking for both subcutaneous fat and muscle loss, and any potential micronutrient deficiencies. Throughout the head to toe exam, the dietitian inspects the skin for color, moisture, texture, temperature, and lesions as abnormalities may indicate micronutrient deficiencies.

02:39

Narrator: First, the dietitian is evaluating the patient's hair quality, looking for change in texture, dullness, thinning, or pluckable hair.

02:48

Narrator: The dietitian then palpates the temples bilaterally, evaluating for any depression or scooping. Severe loss will be very hollow, or scooped. The dietitian then moves to the orbital region, where she palpates the bony ridge directly under the eyes to evaluate fat stores.

03:08

Narrator: The dietitian will take a close look at the eyes and the oral cavity to evaluate potential micronutrient deficiencies. The conjunctiva followed by the sclera of the eyes are evaluated. All aspects of the oral cavity including the lips, corners of the mouth, tongue, teeth and gums are evaluated for any irregularities.

03:29

Narrator: The dietitian then asks the patient to sit up and evaluates the clavicle region and deltoid muscles for any changes or loss of muscle mass. While the patient continues to sit up, she extends her arm straight out, pushing against the hand of the dietitian. Here the dietitian is evaluating the muscle

groups around the scapula bone for any prominence or depression, and checks for a nice coating of muscle around the bone and spine area.

04:01

Narrator: The dietitian then guides the patient's arm into a 90 degree angle, being mindful to any IVs and lines to evaluate the upper arm region for any subcutaneous fat loss.

04:12

Narrator: The RD takes hold of the tricep and gently rolls down her fingers to separate muscle from fat. If fingers are touching, only skin is present, indicating severe loss of subcutaneous fat.

04:26

Narrator: While the patient remains seated upright, the dietitian examines the thoracic region for subcutaneous fat. The RD gathers fat from the bottom of the ribs to the top of the iliac crest. Approximately one inch of fat indicates good fat stores. Ideally, this would be done from a standing position, but can be completed if the patient is seated upright, without pressing back on a chair or bed.

04:51

Narrator: The dietitian now moves down to examine the patient's hands. Here, the dietitian examines the interosseous muscle. At the same time, the dietitian evaluates the patient's nails, nail bed and perfusion for any potential micronutrient deficiencies. This is done by gently pressing down on the nail beds and examining nail quality.

05:14

Narrator: Now, the dietitian will move down to examine the lower body. First, the dietitian will keep an eye out for any edema that may alter the exam, or that may be causing the patient discomfort or pain.

05:27

Narrator: The dietitian will examine the anterior thigh with both hands looking for any depression. She will look at the muscle around the patellar region for any prominent bones. And lastly, examine the posterior calf for muscle definition.

05:41

Narrator: If the patellar bone is very prominent, with no apparent muscle loss, the loss is considered severe. Edema can be evaluated at this time by pressing gently on top of the patient's foot and ankle to determine presence and extent of edema. Again, being mindful of any pain.

06:01

Narrator: For ICU patients, or those unable to participate, it may be wise to check in with or notify the patient's nurse prior to performing the exam. A similar exam can be performed, being mindful of condition, injuries, as well as IVs and lines.

06:18

Narrator: The nutrition focused physical exam can be a valuable addition to your nutrition assessment, and it is critical to the identification and classification of malnutrition.