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## Children's Nutrition Survey 2011: early key findings from the UK and Ireland

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Childhood under-nutrition is an under recognised condition in hospitalised children. Current estimates suggest a prevalence between 8–18% depending on the classification used<sup>(1,2,3,4)</sup>.

The aim of this study was to examine nutrition practices and to establish the current prevalence of under-nutrition in hospitalised children through a large, cross sectional survey conducted in hospital settings across the UK and Ireland.

In April 2011 the Children's Nutrition Survey was conducted. The survey involved participating centres completing two questionnaires regarding nutrition practices and recording anonymous routine clinical data (adapted, with permission, from BAPEN's Adult Nutrition Screening Week 2010).

In total 31 centres participated in the survey of which 20 centres reported the presence of a dedicated nutrition support team (nutrition steering committee). There were no differences in practices of recording weight and height between centres that did and did not have a nutrition support team, however, a significantly greater number of those with nutrition support teams reported that they did have a malnutrition risk plan in place ( $P = 0.003$ ). Clinical data of 1003 children were recorded (573 boys, 427 girls, mean age 5.7 years). Weight measurements were recorded for 931 (93%) children while height was recorded for only 489 (49%). When plotted on current UK growth charts, 107 children (11%) had a weight below  $-2SD$  and could be classified as wasted. Stunting, height falling below  $-2SD$ , was identified in 62 (13%) of children.

**Table 1.** Prevalence of under-nutrition (weight-for-age  $\leq 2SD$ ) according to diagnosis category

	Total number of children	Number of children with weight SD $\leq 2$	% Children at risk of under-nutrition
Neurology	74	3	0.3
GI	102	11	1
Respiratory	148	19	1.9
ENT	69	3	0.3
Renal	65	13	1.3
Orthopaedic	81	5	0.5
Oncology	63	4	0.4
Other/ Unrecorded	385	49	5
Total	1003	107	10.7

GI: Gastrointestinal disease; ENT: Ear, nose and throat.

In conclusion, the present study indicates an overall prevalence of under-nutrition in hospitalised children in the UK and Ireland at approximately 11% (in terms of weight-for-age  $\leq 2SD$ ). Those with a diagnosis of respiratory disease appear to be at higher risk of under-nutrition than other diagnostic categories considered. In this study the presence or absence of nutrition support teams appears to have minimal affect on basic nutrition practices, however, this requires further examination.

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