



Senior Services Division

Malnutrition in Older Adults

This report is intended to identify and understand public health issues affecting older adults age 60+ living in Davis County. The goal of this report is to increase awareness of these conditions and their impact on individuals and communities, identify groups most affected by these issues, and establish strategies for improvement.

Overview of Malnutrition

Malnutrition occurs when a person does not get enough of the nutrients their body needs. Malnutrition encompasses three groups of conditions: undernutrition, nutritional deficiencies, and obesity and chronic disease.

Utah currently has the highest number of deaths attributed to malnutrition among those age 60+ in the nation. Davis County has the 8th highest rate among Utah counties for this issue, which is double the national rate. Women have higher rates of malnutrition-related deaths than men, particularly in Davis County and Utah. Note that women generally live longer than men, so they are more likely to experience the effects of malnutrition.

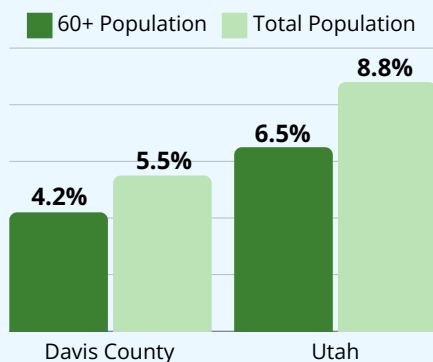
Malnutrition Deaths Among Those Age 60+, Rate per 100,000 (2018-2022)

Davis County		Utah		U.S.	
55.1		67.4		25.1	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
64.1	45.0	80.2	53.3	27.9	21.9

Data: [CDC WONDER](#), 2018 - 2022 (crude)

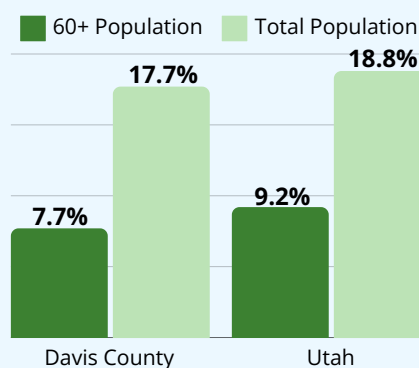
A common risk factor for malnutrition is living below the poverty level. Those who have a low or fixed income may be unable to buy nutritious meals due to the cost. Davis County has a low percentage of older adults living below the poverty level compared to Utah, yet 1 in 13 older adults is worried about being able to afford nutritious meals.

Percentage of Population Living Below the Poverty Level (2017 - 2021)



Data: [IBIS](#), 2017 - 2021 (crude)

Worried About Having Enough Money to Buy Nutritious Meals (2017 - 2021)



Data: [U.S. Census](#), 2017 - 2021 (estimate)

Risk Factors for Malnutrition in Older Adults Include:

- Poor appetite
- Chronic disease
- Poor dental health
- Trouble chewing or swallowing
- Poor mental health
- Medication side effects
- Social isolation
- Dementia
- Low or fixed income
- Changes in living situation
- Transportation limitations
- Caring for grandchildren

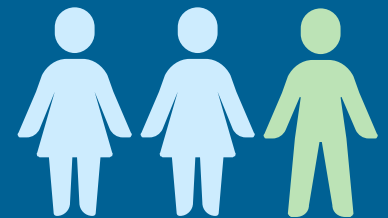
Data: [Feeding America](#), 2021; [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#), 2021



Malnutrition Key Findings

2.2x

Davis County's malnutrition death rate is more than 2 times higher than the national rate₁



2 out of 3 deaths attributed to malnutrition among older adults in Davis County are women₁



1 out of 3 households receiving Food Stamps/SNAP have one or more people age 60+₇

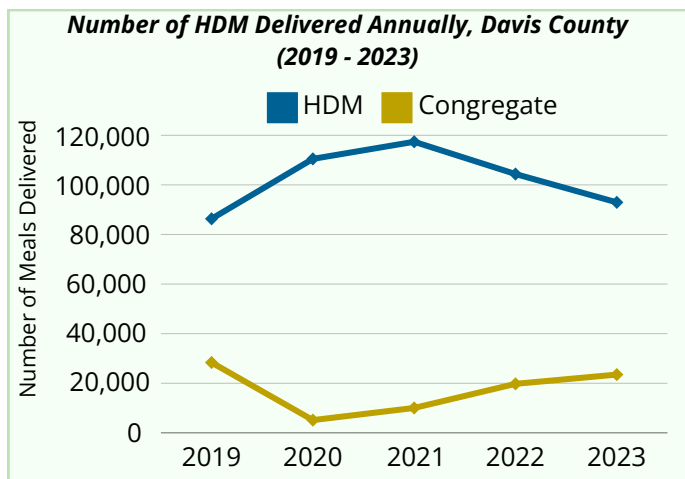
4 - 6 Days

Those with malnutrition are hospitalized for 4 to 6 days longer than those without malnutrition₃

Current Progress and Strategies for Improvement

Local Malnutrition Prevention Efforts

Home-Delivered Meals (HDM) and Congregate Meals

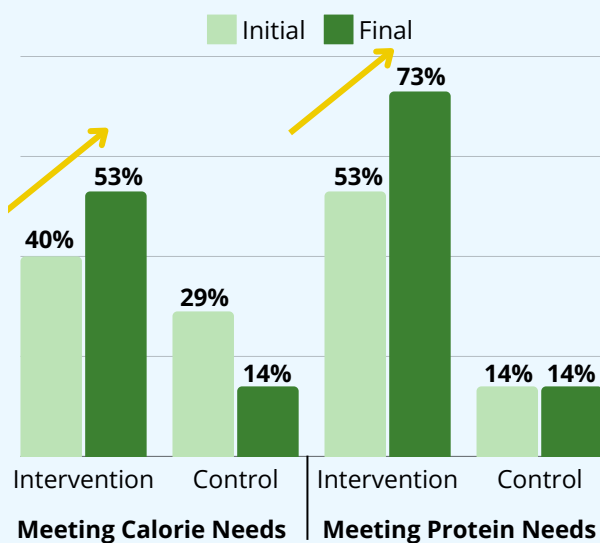


Older adults who participate in Davis County Senior Services' nutrition programs are evaluated for their risk of malnutrition. An average of 23% of congregate meal clients and 54% of HDM clients were determined to be nutritionally at risk in 2023. To combat this, the Senior Services Division has increased the number of meals provided through the Senior Activity Centers. Home-delivered meals, in particular, have increased by nearly 7,000 meals annually since 2019.

Senior Services also participates in the Food Connection program, which allows them to partner with local restaurants to provide food to older adults. In 2023, restaurants donated over 15,000 pounds of food to the Senior Activity Centers.

University of Utah Malnutrition Study

Comparison of participants meeting nutritional needs by study group



Data: [Saffel-Shrier et. al., 2022](#)

Davis County Senior Services, in partnership with the University of Utah, is conducting a five-year malnutrition study. The University of Utah provides a Registered Dietician, who works with older adults attending congregate meals at Senior Activity Centers. This position works within all three of the Senior Activity Centers, conducting malnutrition screenings, presenting food demonstrations, and providing individual and group nutritional counseling and education. The objective of the study is to determine whether there is an improvement in the clients' nutrition after undergoing nutritional counseling.

A similar study was conducted from 2019 to 2022, and focused on homebound HDM clients. Each of the clients who chose to participate were evaluated for meeting their nutritional needs when they initially joined the study and again at the end of the study. Those in the control group, who did not receive any nutritional counseling, did not show any improvement or even worsened. Meanwhile, the intervention group, who received nutritional counseling, showed a marked improvement in meeting their nutritional needs.

Local Resources

Bountiful Community Food Pantry	Bountifulfoodpantry.org/get-help	801-299-8464
Davis4Health Resource Locator	Daviscountyutah.gov/health/davis4health	801-525-5000
Double Up Food Bucks Program	Uah.org/get-help/snap-farmers-market	801-328-2561
Find a Food Pantry Map	Utahfoodbank.org/find-a-pantry/	801-978-2452
Home-Delivered Meals	Daviscountyutah.gov/health/aging-and-adult-services/home-delivered-meals	801-525-5050
Senior Activity Center Congregate Meals	Daviscountyutah.gov/health/senior-services/senior-service-centers	801-525-5050

1. CDC WONDER. 2018-2022. Accessed February 6, 2024. [Wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-provisional.html](https://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-provisional.html)
2. Feeding America. 2021. Accessed February 9, 2024. Feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/senior-hunger-facts
3. Meals on Wheels America. 2019. Accessed March 8, 2024. Mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/research/nourishing-transitions/addressing-malnutrition-web-final.pdf?sfvrsn=f045ba3b_2
4. Nutrition and Aging Resource Center. Accessed February 9, 2024. Acl.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/MalnutritionScreeningPractices.WhoWhatWhyHow2.pdf
5. Saffel-Shrier, et al. 2022. Accessed February 6, 2024. Acl.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/Capstones/YourHealthYourWayYourTable_CapstoneFullReport.pdf
6. U.S. Census. 2018-2022. Accessed February 6, 2024. Data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0102?q=davis%20county,%20utah&moe=true
7. U.S. Census. 2018-2022. Accessed March 15, 2024. Data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S2201?q=davis%20county,%20utah&t=Poverty
8. U.S. Census. 2017-2021. Accessed March 18, 2024. Data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2021.S1701?q=davis%20county,%20utah&t=Poverty&g=010XX00US_040XX00US49