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## NCP Step 1: Nutrition Assessment

### Nutrition Care Process and Nutrition Assessment

Step 1, nutrition assessment, of the Nutrition Care Process forms the foundation for progressing through the other three steps in the process. It is a systematic method for obtaining, verifying, and interpreting data needed to identify nutrition-related problems, their causes, and significance. Nutrition assessment is an ongoing, nonlinear, dynamic process that involves initial data collection as well as also continual reassessment and analysis of the patient/client's status compared to specified criteria.

**Special Note:** The terms **patient/client** are used in association with the NCP; however, the process is also intended for use with groups. In addition, family members or caregivers are an essential asset to the patient/client and food and nutrition professional in the NCP. Therefore, **groups, families, and caregivers** of patients/clients are implied each time a reference is made to patient/client.

Several data sources frequently contribute to a nutrition assessment, such as information gained from the referring health care provider or agency, patient/client interview, medical record, patient/client rounds, community-based surveys, administrative data, and epidemiological studies. Data sources may vary among nutrition settings.

Patients/clients enter the first step of the NCP—nutrition assessment—through two means: screening and referral, both of which are outside of the NCP.

Strong critical thinking skills are essential for selection, collection, and interpretation of data relevant to patients/clients. Each patient/client presents a unique mix of factors, that impact the nutrition assessment approach. The nature of the individual or group and the practice setting/environment guide the appropriate selection of validated and reliable tools to use in data collection.

#### Critical Thinking Skills for Nutrition Assessment

- 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

## Results of a Nutrition Assessment

Nutrition assessment leads to the appropriate initial determination that a nutrition diagnosis/problem exists. Nutrition reassessment leads to reverification that a nutrition diagnosis/problem exists. If a nutrition diagnosis can be made, the food and nutrition professional labels the problem and creates a PES (Problem, Etiology, Signs/Symptoms) statement in Step 2 of the NCP.

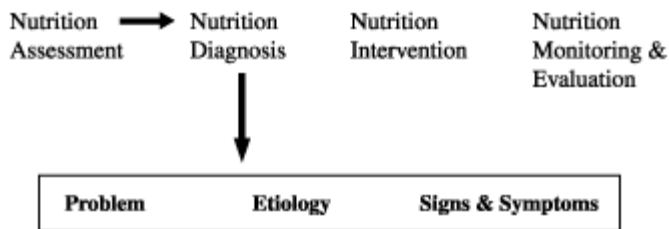
Upon completion of an initial or reassessment, it is also possible that a nutrition problem may not be identified; further information or testing may be necessary to make a determination; or the problem may not be modifiable by further nutrition care and discharge or discontinuation from this episode of nutrition care may be appropriate. If the assessment indicates that no nutrition problem currently exists that warrants a nutrition intervention, practitioners may use the words “No nutrition diagnosis at this time” (2).

As noted earlier, screening and referral are the typical entrance points into the Nutrition Care Process. A screening tool may provide some evidence of an emerging nutrition problem; however, thorough review of the patient/client assessment data may yield no nutrition problem. The same may be true of a referral. Other medical professionals or system protocols may prompt a referral of a patient/client to a nutrition professional, but a nutrition problem is not always present. At that point, it is incumbent on the professional to document the approach recommended, such as whether additional information/testing is needed or if discharge from nutrition care is appropriate.

**Important:** Based on the nutrition assessment/reassessment, the food and nutrition professional determines:

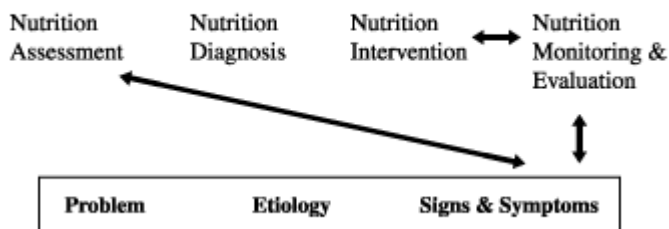
- IF a nutrition diagnosis/problem exists
- AND the plan for continuation of care; specifically, progression through the NCP, the need for additional information/testing prior to continuing in the process, or discharge from nutrition care.

### Relationships



Food and nutrition professionals use the data collected in the nutrition assessment to identify and label the patient/client's nutrition diagnosis using standard nutrition diagnosis terminology. Each nutrition diagnosis has a reference sheet that includes its definition, possible etiology/causes, and common signs or symptoms identified in the nutrition assessment step.

### Relationships



In addition, through nutrition reassessment, food and nutrition professionals perform nutrition monitoring and evaluation to determine whether the nutrition intervention strategy is working to resolve the nutrition diagnosis, its etiology, and/or signs and symptoms.

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