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Step by step Guide for Accurate Weight Recording within Aged Care

By Ella Monaghan, OSCAR Care Group Lead Dietitian



Within residential Aged Care, the process of weighing a resident can be conducted using portable scales, wheelchair scales, hoists or beds designed with built in scales. Weighing is generally conducted on a monthly basis or more frequently either weekly or daily as per medical advice.

Why is weighing residents important?

Obtaining an accurate weight recording is an important diagnostic & monitoring tool which healthcare professionals utilise to recommend appropriate care.

An accurate body weight is used for a range of reasons:

- Assess & monitor nutritional status – including malnutrition
- Calculate nutritional requirements such as for a residents energy (kJ), protein and fluid needs
- For the calculation of safe medication dosages
- Monitoring clinical status – such as for residents with chronic kidney disease or liver disease
- Provide insight into whether nutritional interventions have resulted in a positive weight change.
- To calculate the residents healthy weight range
- To calculate an enteral feed (tube feeding) regimen

What is the process?

During a nutritional assessment, the Dietitian will review the resident's current weight & weight history within the last month, 3 months, 6 months & 1 year to determine weight changes.

Based on the resident's weight, the Dietitian will calculate nutritional requirements in order to determine the specific quantity of energy (kJ), protein and fluid that the resident requires, in line with their individual clinical needs.

When a resident is required to be fed via a feeding tube (enteral nutrition), the Dietitian requires an accurate weight recording in able to develop a feeding regimen that outlines specifically the most suitable type of formula and how much is required to ensure that it meets the residents nutritional needs.

Steps to weighing a resident accurately

1. Prior to weighing, ensure the calibration date is still valid and check scales for damage.
2. Place scales on a firm solid surface (do not place scales on carpet).
3. Scale or hoist is not be leaning against a hard surface such as a wall/cupboard.
4. Zero scales prior to use.
5. Explain the weighing process to the resident and verbal consent should be obtained.
6. Ensure the resident is wearing light clothing.
7. Remove the resident's shoes prior to weighing as this can provide an inaccurate result.
8. Empty stoma or catheter bags prior to weighing.
9. Encourage the resident to void their bladder or bowel prior to weighing and change soiled pants.
10. Preferably weigh residents at the same time of day on the same scales/hoist used.
11. Ensure that the resident does not have their feet placed on the floor when using sitting scales or on any part of the hoist.
12. Document in the resident's progress notes the presence of any oedema or ascites as this can provide an inaccurate 'true' weight.

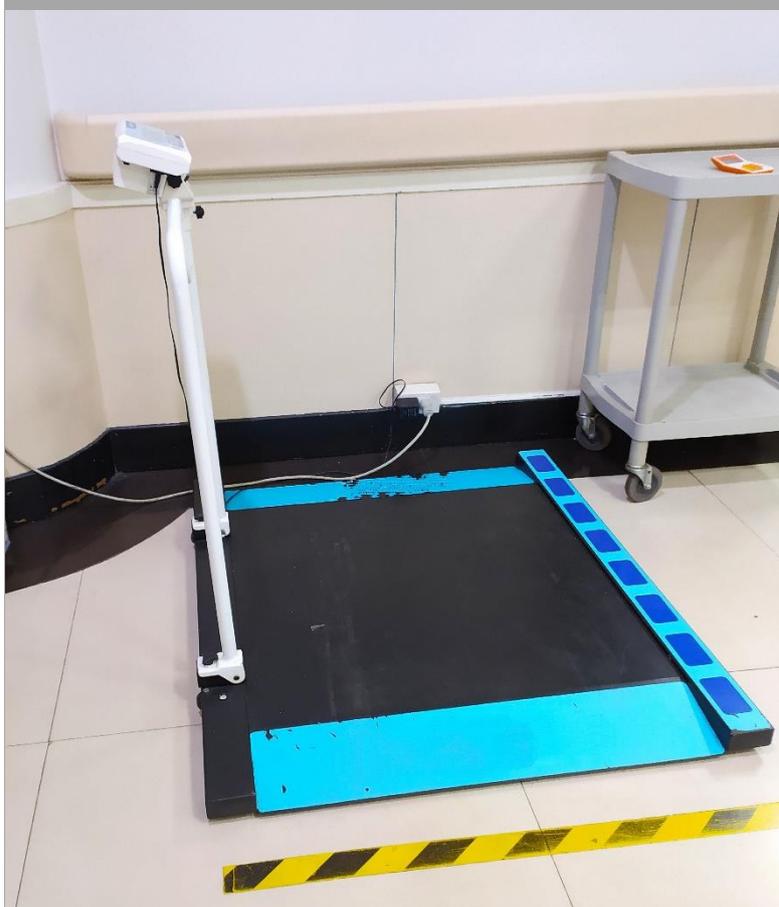
If weighing using a hoist

1. Ensure the sling is the correct size for the person and that the hoist is compatible with the scales being used.
2. The weighing equipment must record zero prior to the hoist sling being attached.



If weighing using wheelchair scales

1. First weigh the wheelchair.
2. Then weigh the resident sitting comfortably within the wheelchair.
3. To calculate the resident's weight, subtract the weight of the resident sitting in the chair



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What to do if you notice an unusual difference in weight?

If you notice that there is a large weight change (either weight loss or gain) it is important that the resident is re-weighed to ensure that the weight recorded is accurate.

1. Re-weigh the resident using the steps outlined above to ensure accuracy.
2. Check the weight again on a different weighing machine.
3. Check when the scales/weighing device were last calibrated. Request re calibration if required.
4. Request another staff member or Dietitian to supervise the weighing process.
5. Contact your Dietitian who will be able to assist in determining if the weight change is accurate or whether this is associated with another underlying cause (such as fluid shifts or commencement of medications such as Lasix).



References:

National Nurses Nutrition Group. Good practice guidelines – for accurate body weight measurement using weighing scales in adults and children. February 2017. Available from; <https://www.nnng.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Accurate-Body-Weight-Measurement-GPG-Final-draft-Feb17.pdf>



Need to establish a plan to ensure a resident's weighing & other nutritional requirements are met?

To consult with **OSCAR** Care Group's Lead Dietitian, Ella Monaghan, or our other friendly, qualified Dietitians around Australia, please call or email via our contact details below.



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