

What to Expect When Being Treated for Malnutrition at a Health Clinic

Malnutrition can impact a child's brain development and physical growth. Children who are severely malnourished should be taken to a health clinic as soon as possible so they can get food supplements and other appropriate care. Our goal as leaders is to help families identify the need to visit a clinic and, when appropriate, ensure that access to care is available.



KEY POINTS

- **Recognize when to take a child to a health clinic.** If a child is classified as severely malnourished at a screening, the mother or caretaker should be encouraged to take the child to a clinic for an assessment by a trained health worker, the same day if possible. Health workers will review the child's needs and make recommendations that can help the child recover.
- **Health workers may recommend food supplements.** Supplements can come in different forms, including cereals and other foods that have extra nutrients added to them, powdered supplements that are sprinkled on a child's food, or liquid supplements that treat dehydration from diarrhea.
- **Health workers may treat children for intestinal worms.** Children can sometimes be infected with intestinal worms that make it so they can't absorb nutrients from food. Health workers may give the child medicine to help prevent or eliminate these worms.
- **Health workers may recommend treatments for other conditions or diseases.** Health workers may identify other conditions or diseases that could be impacting a child's nutrition, such as malaria or respiratory or other infectious diseases. For example, if a child has a respiratory illness, has lost his or her appetite, and finds it hard to eat enough to stay healthy, a health worker may give the child an antibiotic to treat the illness. Health workers may also recommend immunizations to prevent common diseases that can impact a child's nutrition.

Questions to Prayerfully Consider

- In our area, which families might struggle with malnutrition? Is this a widespread problem?
- What are the best ways to teach members in our area about the importance of treating malnutrition?
- Where can families in our area attend a malnutrition screening?
- What health clinics are in our area? Which local health clinics offer resources to help combat malnutrition?
- Which local health clinics provide affordable care to families? Which families may have difficulty paying for health services?



Inspiration from Church Leaders

“Jesus has a tender heart for children. ... And He rejoices at even the smallest effort to help them”
(Camille N. Johnson, in *“The Church of Jesus Christ Gives US\$32 Million to the World Food Programme,”* Sept. 14, 2022, newsroom. [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Consider these ideas and others as you counsel together and pray for guidance.

Leaders

- **Identify common barriers.** Identify common barriers to getting malnutrition screenings and treatment at health clinics, such as affordability. Look for solutions to these barriers.
- **Identify health clinics in your area that offer malnutrition screenings and treatments.** Let families know about these resources.
- **Teach members about the importance of malnutrition screenings and treatment.** For example, you could hold a Relief Society meeting where you share information about the importance of malnutrition screenings and the treatment resources available at health clinics.

Ministering Brothers and Sisters

- If a child shows signs of malnutrition, sensitively counsel with the family about ways they can improve their situation.
- Identify health clinics in your area that offer malnutrition screenings and treatments. Let families know about these resources.

Handout: What to Expect When Being Treated for Malnutrition at a Health Clinic

Share this handout with families in your stake and ward. It provides useful information and suggestions.

Treatment is essential for a child with malnutrition

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Malnutrition can impact a child's brain development and physical growth. A child who is severely malnourished should be seen as soon as possible in a health clinic so they can get food supplements and other treatments.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE TREATMENTS YOU CAN EXPECT:

- FOOD SUPPLEMENTS**
 - These are usually cereals, porridge, or other foods that have extra nutrients added to them.
 - They might also be powdered supplements that you sprinkle on your child's food.
 - On average, children eat these once a day for two to three months.
- LIQUID SUPPLEMENTS**
 - If your child is experiencing dehydration caused by diarrhea, health workers may recommend a supplement in liquid form.
- MEDICINE FOR INTESTINAL WORMS**
 - Children can sometimes be infected with intestinal worms that make it so they can't absorb nutrients from food.
 - Health workers may give your child medicine to prevent or eliminate these worms.
- MEDICINE FOR OTHER CONDITIONS OR DISEASES**
 - Health workers may identify other conditions or diseases that could be impacting your child's nutrition, such as a respiratory illness, malaria, or other infectious disease.
 - Health workers may recommend medicines or shots to treat these diseases.
 - Health workers may also recommend immunizations to prevent common diseases that can impact a child's nutrition.



THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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LEARN MORE

Learn more about malnutrition treatments and other ways to improve child nutrition: ChildNutrition.ChurchofJesusChrist.org

