

Executive summary

Conclusions

- ▶ Overall, our synthesis shows that there are no reliable scientific findings regarding the benefits of dietary supplements for undernourished elderly people and those belonging to a risk group. However, in a few studies, favourable but small effects have been reported. This applies to hand-grip strength and body weight. However, results regarding change of fat-free body mass do not support the fact that dietary supplements provide more favourable results than ordinary diet. These results need to be confirmed in new studies with better scientific methodology.
- ▶ Possible adverse effects on health need to be systematically mapped into new studies.
- ▶ There are examples from different parts of the country that indicate that practices vary in how dietary supplements are used or subsidized. However, no current and reliable mapping of this is available.
- ▶ There is no scientific evidence to assess any possible health-economic effects.

Undernourishment is common among elderly people throughout the sector of health- and elderly care. With an aging population this problem will increase in the coming decades. A common way to prevent and treat undernutrition is to give the elderly person a dietary supplement, containing energy and protein, as a complement to everyday ordinary diet. We have compiled research on what effects dietary supplement has for elderly people (70 years or older) who are undernourished or belong to a group with an increased risk of undernutrition.

This HTA report was conducted in accordance with SBU's methodology (www.sbu.se).

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SBU Assessments no 228, 2014
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