

2. Assessment of Malnutrition

Objectives of the session

By the end of the session, the ASHA will learn about:

- Know signs of malnutrition in a sick child.
- Be able to classify grades of malnutrition.
- Be able to plot weight for age on a growth chart.

ALL sick children should be assessed for signs suggesting malnutrition.

Check for Malnutrition

Look and Feel:

- Look for visible severe wasting.
- Look for oedema of both feet.
- Determine grade of malnutrition by plotting weight for age (with AWW).

Identifying Visible Severe Wasting

- A child with visible severe wasting is very thin, has no fat, and looks like skin and bones. Some children are thin but do not have visible severe wasting. This assessment step helps you in identifying the children with visible severe wasting who need urgent treatment and **referral to a hospital**.
- To look for visible severe wasting, remove the child's clothes. Look for severe wasting of the muscles of the shoulders, arms, buttocks and legs. Look at the child from the side to see if the fat of the buttocks is missing. When wasting is extreme, there are many folds of skin on the buttocks and thigh.
- The face of a child with visible severe wasting may still look normal. The child's abdomen may be large or distended.
- Look and feel to determine if the child has swelling of both feet. Use your thumb to press gently for a few seconds on the upper surface of each foot. The child has oedema if a dent remains in the child's foot when you lift your thumb.

Determine Grade of Malnutrition

The AWW uses a growth monitoring chart for every child. Every child in the village should be weighed and his/her weight plotted on the growth chart. There is a separate chart for boys and for girls under the age of five years.

How to plot weight for age and identify malnutrition:

- The left hand vertical line is the measure of the child's weight.
- The bottom line of the chart shows the child's age in months.

