

HOW DO YOU CALCULATE WEIGHT LOSS?

The following chart identifies what is considered significant or severe weight loss.

PERCENT OF BODY WEIGHT LOSS INDICATING HEALTH RISK

Interval	Significant Less	Severe Loss
1 month	5%	Greater than 5%
3 months	7.5%	Greater than 7.5%
6 months	10%	Greater than 10%

HOW DO YOU CALCULATE WEIGHT LOSS? The following formula determines percentage of weight loss:

$(\text{Starting weight} - \text{current weight}) / (\text{starting weight}) \times 100$ equals % of body weight loss.

If current weight is less than 5% of usual body weight, the weight change is considered not significant.

Let's take the example of Mrs. K. When she arrived at Pioneer Village from the hospital, her weight was 160 pounds. At the end of 30 days, she weighed 151 pounds. Subtract 151 from 160, and you get 9. Divide 9 by the starting weight and you get .056. Multiply this by 100 and you get 5.6% weight loss. Her weight loss was significant, but was physician prescribed, since the physician orders for the diuretic medication and leg elevation resulted in resolution of her edema.

In contrast, the example of Mrs. L. indicates an unintentional loss of weight. When she arrived at Pioneer Village from the hospital, her weight was 160 pounds. At the end of the 30 days, she weighed 151 pounds. Doing the math, you get the same 5.6% weight loss. However, while this weight loss was significant, it was not a result of a doctor's orders and therefore not intended. Such unintentional significant weight loss needs to be addressed by the care team.

TO DO QUICK CALCULATIONS TO DETERMINE IF A PERSON HAS LOST OR GAINED A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF WEIGHT, USE THE FOLLOWING TABLE:

Calculating weight loss	Calculating weight gain
5% weight loss in 30 days	5% weight gain in 30 days
Start with the person's weight closest to 30 days ago and multiply it by .95 (or 95%). The resulting figure represents a 5% loss from the weight 30 days ago. If the resident's current weight is equal to or less than the resulting figure, the resident has lost more than 5% body weight.	Start with the person's weight closest to 30 days ago and multiply it by 1.05 (or 105%). The resulting figure represents a 5% gain from the weight 30 days ago. If the person's current weight is equal to or more than the resulting figure, the person has gained more than 5% body weight.
10% weight loss in 180 days	10% weight gain in 180 days
Start with the person's weight closest to 180 days ago and multiply it by .90 (or 90%). The resulting figure represents a 10% loss from the weight 180 days ago. If the person's current weight is equal to or less than the resulting figure, the person has lost 10% or more body weight.	Start with the person's weight closest to 180 days ago and multiply it by 1.10 (or 110%). The resulting figure represents a 10% gain from the weight 180 days ago. If the person's current weight is equal to or more than the resulting figure, the person has gained more than 10% body weight.

Unintended weight loss among the elderly is an important indicator of a change in a health status or environment. That's why when a significant weight loss is noted, it's important that you review the possible causes:

- Are there any changes in medication such as diuretics that could cause weight loss?
- Has the person changed how much they're eating and drinking? Look for any reasons why.
- What are the person's calorie needs? Are they meeting their calorie needs?

Remember, staying vigilant for unintended weight loss among the people in your care is a continuous process of process of assessing and individualizing approaches to ensure that they stay as healthy as possible. It is paramount that both the patient and physician are aware of any significant weight change and are included when developing a plan of care. Every care team member has a role to play to act in response to documented weight changes.