



GUIDELINE

**UPDATES ON THE MANAGEMENT
OF SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION
IN INFANTS AND CHILDREN**



World Health
Organization

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Abbreviations

CI	confidence interval
eLENA	electronic Library of Evidence for Nutrition Actions
FEAST	Fluid Expansion as Supportive Therapy (trial)
GRADE	Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation
Hb	haemoglobin
IM	intramuscular
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illness
IV	intravenous
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCHS	National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
PICO	patient/population, intervention, control, outcomes
SD	standard deviation
TB	tuberculosis
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

Purpose of the guideline¹

Severe acute malnutrition affects nearly 20 million preschool-age children, mostly from the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region and South-East Asia Region. Malnutrition is a significant factor in approximately one third of the nearly 8 million deaths in children who are under 5 years of age worldwide (1). WHO established guidelines for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in 1999 and Member States have requested WHO to update their 1999 document *Management of severe malnutrition: a manual for physicians and other senior health workers* (2). This guideline presents the updated evidence and practice for key interventions and will also serve to inform revisions of the manual. This guideline does not reflect all WHO recommendations related to the management of children with severe acute malnutrition but only those related to areas that were prioritized by the guideline development group: the WHO Nutrition Guidance Advisory Group – Subgroup on Nutrition in the Life Course and Undernutrition 2010–2012. This group reviewed the previously published guidelines and indicated the areas of care and specific recommendations that should be revised first in the process of updating all WHO recommendations. Relevant standing recommendations are included adjacent to updated recommendations, to contextualize updated recommendations. Other WHO recommendations will be addressed in future guideline updates.

Guideline development methodology

WHO has developed the present evidence-informed recommendations using the procedures outlined in the *WHO handbook for guideline development* (3). The steps in this process included: (i) identification of priority questions and outcomes; (ii) retrieval of the evidence; (iii) assessment of the quality of evidence and synthesis of the findings; (iv) formulation of recommendations, including future research priorities; and (v) planning for dissemination, implementation, impact evaluation and updating of the guideline. The *Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and*

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