

Guideline for Weighing Procedures in Nursing Homes

A *standardized weighing protocol* should be used to assess residents' body weight monthly. The key component of a standardized weighing protocol is consistency for the following elements:

- **Type of Scale:** residents should be routinely weighed on the same type of scale (e.g., chair versus bed) and staff should ensure the scale is calibrated to zero prior to each weighing episode. If the scale cannot be manually calibrated to zero, a small hand-held weight (5 lb or 10 lb) can be stored near the scale to check accuracy.
- **Time of Day:** residents should be routinely weighed at the same time of day (e.g., before or after breakfast) each month.
- **Clothing:** residents should be routinely weighed in their bed clothes for the most accurate body weight to avoid weighing errors due to additional items (e.g., shoes, hat, sweater, lap blanket). If a resident has incontinence, staff should provide incontinence care prior to weighing.
- **Staff member:** staff responsible for weighing residents should be trained in the operation of the facility scale(s) and the importance of using a standardized procedure to ensure accurate weight values. For auditing purposes, a supervisory-level person should observe the staff while s/he is conducting residents' weights (e.g., approximately 5 residents per month) to ensure that standardized procedures are being followed consistently and weight values are being recorded accurately. An observation tool for auditing purposes is available (upon request from the first author). In addition, monthly changes in residents' body weights, ideally, should be calculated via computer to avoid mathematical errors.

NOTE: We also strongly recommend using a standardized tool to monitor [body weight assessment procedures](#). This tool can be used by supervisory-level staff to observe a sample of 5 residents each month during weight assessments to identify potential problems or inconsistencies in the weighing procedures.