

Residents of assisted living facilities lost significant, concerning weight during the COVID-19 quarantine

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Older adults residing in assisted living facilities and quarantined to their rooms during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic lost significant weight, according to gerontology care providers and researchers from McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston.

Significant weight loss of at least 5% occurred in 40% of residents, with 47% of those losing 10% or more of their weight. Men in the study were 14 times more likely to lose significant weight due to [quarantine](#).

The findings were presented recently at the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association 2022 National Conference.

"Room quarantine can result in loneliness, decreased appetite, less meal encouragement, and less assistance with eating," said lead author Maureen S. Beck, DNP, MSN, assistant professor in the Joan and Stanford Alexander Division of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine at McGovern Medical School. "Losing 5% of their weight is significant for [elderly patients](#) and can lead to the loss of independent function."

Researchers did a chart review of 80 patients of the UT Physicians House Call Program within the UT Physicians Center for Healthy Aging who were in assisted living facilities from January to August of 2020. Room quarantines began in March.

"We discovered that facilities may not consistently weigh residents from month to month and some do not weigh them at all. Our study highlights the need for a standard process of monitoring weight during quarantine periods for providers and facilities, especially in male residents," Beck said. "Room quarantine continues to be used at facilities when residents become positive."

The researchers said room isolation, eating off disposable plates, and a lack of therapy or group activities could all be contributing factors.

The poster detailing the findings, "The Effect of Quarantine on Body Weight in Residents of Assisted Living Facilities During COVID-19," won first place at the conference.

The research team included Shuyan Bi, MSN, AGNP-C, with the UT Physicians Center for Healthy Aging; and Faith Atai, MD, and Nahid Rianon, MBBS, DrPH, both associate professors of geriatric and palliative medicine at McGovern Medical School.

Beck said the team will begin working on a quality improvement project to develop better guidelines for weight documentation and alerts for significant [weight](#) changes at assisted living facilities.

Provided by University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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