



Wound Healing And Your Diet

Why is a healthy diet important for wound healing?

- Your body uses nutrients from a healthy diet to help fight infection and heal wounds. Wounds may be caused by injury, incisions (cuts) made during surgery, or pressure ulcers. Pressure ulcers (sores) on your skin can form when there is pressure or rubbing. In the early stages of a pressure ulcer, the ulcer may be an area of reddened skin that does not go away. In later stages, the skin breaks and the wound becomes deep. People with diabetes or blood flow problems have a higher risk of getting pressure ulcers. People who stay in the same position for long periods of time are also more likely to get pressure ulcers. This includes people who use a wheelchair or who need to stay in bed.
- How fast and how well your wound heals depends on many things. There is no special diet that will heal your wound. However, studies have found that healing takes longer in people who follow a poor diet. A poor diet is one that is very low in calories or important nutrients. Wound healing also takes longer in people who are not eating well while their wounds are healing. Nutrients that are most important for healing are protein, zinc, and vitamin C. Drinking enough liquids each day is also important for wound healing.

What are ways to include more healthy foods in my diet?

- Eat a variety of foods from each food group every day. The food groups include breads and starches, vegetables, fruits, meats and protein foods, and dairy. Eat regular meals and snacks to help you eat enough servings from each food group. If you have trouble eating three meals each day, eat 5 to 6 small meals throughout the day instead. Include good sources of protein, zinc and vitamin C in your diet each day. Drink plenty of liquids during and between meals, unless your caregiver has told you to limit your liquid intake.
- Limit foods that are high in fat, sugar, and salt. Some foods that are high in fat and sugar are doughnuts, cookies, fried foods, candy, and regular soda. These foods are unhealthy choices because they are low in healthy nutrients that are important for healing.

What foods are good sources of protein?

Foods that are high in protein are listed below. The average protein content of each food is listed in grams beside the name of the food. The protein content may vary slightly between brands of each food. Read the labels of packaged items like protein powders to find the amount of protein in them. Ask your caregiver how much protein you need in your diet each day.

- **Dairy:**
 - One cup of any type of fresh milk (8).
 - One-fourth cup of nonfat dry milk (11).
 - One ounce of semi-hard or solid cheese (7).
 - One-half cup of cottage cheese (14).
 - One-half cup of pudding (4).
 - Eight ounces of plain or fruit yogurt (8).

- **Meats and meat substitutes:**

- Three ounces of cooked fresh water fish (21).
- One-half cup of canned tuna (14).
- Three ounces of cooked shellfish (19).
- Three ounces of cooked chicken, turkey, or other poultry (24).
- Three ounces of cooked beef, pork, lamb or other red meat (21).
- One large egg (6).
- One-half cup of tofu or tempeh (10).
- One cup of soy milk (4).
- One cup of cooked dried beans, like pinto, kidney, or navy (15).

- **Nuts and seeds:**

- Two tablespoons of almonds, cashews, or walnuts (5).
- Two tablespoons of peanut butter (8).
- Two tablespoons of peanuts (7).

How can I add extra protein to the foods in my diet?

You can increase the amount of protein in your diet by adding extra protein to your dishes or drinks.

- Powdered milk added to whole milk, pudding, yogurt or baked goods.
- Protein powders added to drinks or moist foods.
- Cheese added to sandwiches, omelettes, burritos, or beans.
- Low-fat milk added to omelettes.
- Nuts and peanut butter added to cookies.
- Extra cheese or eggs added to casseroles.
- Meat added to lasagna or spaghetti.
- Yogurt and milk added to fruit smoothies.
- Beans and cheese added to salads.
- Cheese added to vegetables or potatoes.

What foods are good sources of vitamin C?

Vitamin C is found in fruits and vegetables. Fruits such as oranges, strawberries, grapefruit, cantaloupe, and tangerines are good sources of vitamin C. Red and green bell peppers, broccoli, potatoes, tomatoes, and cabbage are also high in vitamin C.

What foods are good sources of zinc?

Good sources of zinc are beef, liver and crab. Smaller amounts of zinc are found in sunflower seeds, almonds, peanut butter, eggs and milk. Other foods that contain zinc include wheat germ, black-eyed peas, and whole-grain products.

How much liquid do I need each day?

Men 19 years old and older should drink about 3.0 Liters of liquid each day (close to 13 eight-ounce cups). Women 19 years old and older should drink about 2.2 Liters of liquid each day (close to 9 eight-ounce cups). Water, beverages, and water found in solid foods count towards this daily liquid amount. Good choices for most people to drink include water, juice, and milk. If you are used to drinking liquids that contain caffeine, such as coffee, these can also be counted in your daily liquid amount. Food items such as soup, fruit, and vegetables also add liquid to your diet. Ask your caregiver how much liquid you should drink each day.

What other diet changes may be needed?

Some people are not able to eat enough food to get the nutrients they need. If you are not getting enough nutrients, your caregiver may suggest that you take a multivitamin or another supplement. He may also suggest that you drink nutrition supplements for extra protein and calories. These can be bought in most grocery stores.

Care Agreement

You have the right to help plan your care. Discuss treatment options with your caregivers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

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