



Eating Well For Wound Healing

**Diabetes and Nutrition Services
Community Dietitians**

Service provided by

Sirona
care & health

About this leaflet

This leaflet provides nutritional information for people with pressure injuries/wounds, as well as those at risk of developing pressure injuries.

Some of the advice is different to 'normal' healthy eating guidelines. This is because the body has extra nutritional needs when healing a wound.

When your wound(s) are healed, it may be necessary to stop following this advice to avoid unplanned weight gain.

Nutrition and healing

Nutrition plays an essential role in the treatment of wounds and in the prevention and treatment of pressure injuries.

To heal a wound the body needs more protein than usual and may also need more energy (calories) than usual too. Having a poor nutrient and fluid intake can increase the risk of pressure injuries.

If sufficient energy and protein are not consumed, the body will still try to heal itself by breaking down fat stores (to release energy) and muscle (to release protein). Healing may take place, but the loss of fat and muscle will cause unplanned weight loss which could lead to malnutrition and muscle weakness.

Malnutrition

Malnutrition increases the risk of illness and makes it harder for the body to fight infection and heal itself, so wounds may not heal. Malnutrition can also reduce energy levels, muscle strength, mobility and can weaken the heart.

If you have a wound and are at risk of malnutrition, you will need to increase your intake of energy **and** protein - the 'Improving Nutrition' or your local 'Food First' leaflet explains how to increase your energy intake (please ask your GP, community nurse or dietitian for this leaflet).

If you have a wound and are not at risk of malnutrition, you may not need to increase your energy intake very much, but you will probably need to increase your protein intake.

What do I need to eat?

Our bodies need us to eat a range of different foods every day to ensure we are eating a balanced diet.

Protein

Protein is essential to help the body make new tissue. When we don't eat enough protein our tissues become weaker and when damaged, are slower to heal. To make sure you are eating enough protein try to have a balanced diet, including a protein food at each meal.

This could include:

- Meat and offal (eg liver and kidney)
- Fish and eggs
- Milk* (including dairy-free, such as soya milk), with breakfast cereals or as a drink
- Cheese
- Nuts and seeds
- Beans and pulses
- Quorn, soya or textured vegetable protein (TVP)

You should aim to include protein-rich foods and/or drinks with every meal.

***Milk can be fortified with milk powder to further increase its energy and protein content:**

- Measure out 2-4 heaped tablespoons (30-60g) of dried milk powder.
- Add a small amount of your regular milk from 1 pint and mix to a smooth paste with no lumps, then add the remaining milk.

Use this fortified milk throughout the day in place of your regular milk.

Iron

Iron is essential in the diet to prevent iron-deficiency anaemia. It is important for carrying oxygen around the body and also for wound healing.

Try to have at least three portions of iron rich foods daily, such as:

- Offal (eg liver and kidney)
- Red meat
- Eggs
- Beans and pulses
- Fortified breakfast cereals

Other useful sources of iron include poultry, fish, dried fruit and green leafy vegetables.



Top tip

The absorption of iron is hampered by tannins present in tea and coffee. Try not have tea and coffee within an hour of eating.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is also important for wound healing and helps with the absorption of iron.

Try to include food and drinks rich in vitamin C every day. Vitamin C is found in fruit, vegetables and their juices.



Top tip

You could increase your vitamin C intake by snacking on oranges, kiwis, strawberries, tomatoes, and peppers, or by having a small glass of fruit juice (orange, grapefruit or mango) with your meal.

Zinc

Zinc is important in the formation of new skin tissue and to help pressure injuries heal.

Try to have zinc-rich foods daily, such as:

- Eggs
- Meat, chicken and fish
- Unrefined or wholegrain cereal, porridge and bread
- Milk and dairy foods
- Green leafy vegetables and beans

Vitamin and mineral supplements

If you cannot eat enough foods/drinks containing key vitamins and minerals like iron, vitamin C and zinc you may need to have a daily complete over-the-counter supplement.

If you are managing to eat a full and varied diet, there would be no benefit in taking an additional supplement and it may even be harmful. Your GP or dietitian will be able to advise you.

Fluid

Dehydrated skin can become dry, fragile and more prone to injuries. Dehydrated skin can also slow wound healing. Keep a drink beside you and sip it regularly.

You should aim for 1500-2000ml (around 6-8 glasses) of fluid per day to stay hydrated, unless advised otherwise by a doctor or specialist nurse.

Meal ideas

Main meal ideas

- Liver and bacon with mashed potato and onion gravy
- Meat or Quorn lasagne with salad
- Cottage/shepherd's pie with green vegetables
- Fish pie and peas
- Lentil/chicken curry with rice or potatoes
- Mixed bean/meat chilli with rice





Sandwich fillings

- Meat
- Fish (tinned or otherwise)
- Egg
- Cheese
- Peanut butter (with or without jam)
- Hummus
- Falafel



Top tip

For additional calories and energy, try adding mayonnaise or chutney to your sandwich.

Snacks between meals

- Sandwich, containing any of the fillings on the previous page
- Yoghurt
- Hummus and bread sticks
- Nuts*
- Cheese and biscuits*
- Sausage roll*
- Pork pie*
- Scotch egg*





Desserts

- Milk puddings (eg rice pudding and semolina), topped with jam, honey or syrup*
 - Fruit crumble with custard or ice cream
 - Fruit trifle with cream or ice cream
 - Whipped dessert such as Angel Delight, made with your usual milk
 - Mousse
 - Yoghurt (dairy or dairy-free)
 - Nourishing drinks
 - Milk
 - Milkshakes
 - Hot chocolate/Horlicks/Ovaltine, made with your usual milk
 - Milky coffee
 - Smoothies
- * These options are higher-calorie and suitable for those at risk of malnutrition.

Example daily meal plan



Breakfast:

Cereal with milk

Glass of fruit juice

Mid-morning snack:

Handful of nuts/yoghurt

A drink – if you are at risk of malnutrition, try to choose a nourishing drink from the list above.

Lunch:

Egg or hummus and tomato sandwich

A drink, such as water or squash

Mid-afternoon snack:

Cheese and biscuits with grapes

A drink, such as tea/coffee

Evening meal:

Lentil, chicken or meat curry with rice or potatoes

A drink

Dessert:

Fruit crumble and custard

Bed-time drink:

Milky drink, such as Horlicks



Following the advice in this leaflet should help improve your wound healing.

If you are not able to follow this advice or your wound fails to heal, contact your dietitian, district/practice nurse, tissue viability nurse or GP for further support.

If you have diabetes, it is important to know that poorly-controlled diabetes can delay wound healing. Your medication may need to be adjusted as it is important your blood glucose control is optimal. You can speak with your doctor, nurse or dietitian if you need help with this.

Oral nutritional supplements

If your food intake remains low or it is not enough to help the wound heal, your GP or dietitian may recommend you use oral nutritional supplement drinks to promote wound healing.

If you follow a vegan or dairy-free diet, ask your dietitian for further advice.

This leaflet has been developed by Sirona care & health Diabetes and Nutrition Services Community Dietitians in collaboration with the Wound Care Service.

For further advice and guidance contact our team on:

Email: Sirona.dieteticsadvice@nhs.net



**Let us know what you
think and get involved**

T: 0300 124 5300*

E: sirona.hello@nhs.net

W: www.sirona-cic.org.uk

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Registered office

Sirona care & health CIC,
Badminton Rd Office, 2nd Floor,
Badminton Rd, Yate, BS37 5AF

Company Number: 07585003