

Eating Well for Wound Healing Key Points

Diabetes and Nutrition Services Community Dietitians



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Scan the QR code to view our page on the Sirona care and health website.

About This Leaflet:

This leaflet provides information about eating well for people who have pressure injuries or other wounds, and for those who are at risk of developing pressure injuries.

Some of the advice in this leaflet is different from general healthy eating guidelines. This is because your body has extra nutritional needs when it is healing a wound.

Once your wound(s) have healed, you may need to stop following this specific advice to avoid gaining unwanted weight.

How Nutrition Helps Healing:

To heal a wound, your body needs **more protein than usual** and may also need **more energy (calories)**. Not eating enough nutrients and drinking enough fluids can increase your risk of getting pressure injuries.

If you don't eat enough energy and protein, your body will still try to heal itself by using its stored fat for energy and breaking down muscle to get protein. Losing fat and muscle will cause unplanned weight loss, which can lead to malnutrition and muscle weakness.

What is Malnutrition?

Malnutrition makes you more likely to get ill and makes it harder for your body to fight infection and heal. This means wounds might not heal properly. Malnutrition can also make you feel tired, reduce your muscle strength and ability to move, and can weaken your heart.

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

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

What Do I Need to Eat?

Our bodies need a variety of different foods every day.

Protein:

Protein is essential for helping your body make new tissue, which is needed to heal wounds. To make sure you are getting enough protein, try to eat protein at each meal.

Good sources of protein include:

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

Aim to include protein-rich foods and/or drinks with every meal.

Boosting Protein and Energy in Milk: You can add milk powder to your regular milk to increase its energy and protein content:
Use this fortified milk instead of your regular milk throughout the day.

Iron:

Iron is important to prevent iron-deficiency anaemia. It helps carry oxygen around your body and is also important for wound healing.

Try to eat at least three portions of iron-rich foods each day, such as:

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

Other good sources of iron include chicken, fish, dried fruit, and green leafy vegetables.

Top Tip: Tea and coffee contain tannins, which can make it harder for your body to absorb iron. Try not to drink tea and coffee for about an hour before and after eating.

Vitamin C:

Vitamin C is important for wound healing and helps your body absorb iron. Try to include foods and drinks rich in vitamin C every day. Vitamin C is found in fruits, vegetables, and their juices, such as oranges, kiwis, strawberries, tomatoes, and peppers.

Zinc:

Zinc helps your body form new skin tissue and helps pressure injuries heal. Try to eat zinc-rich foods every day, such as:

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

Fluid:

If your skin is dehydrated, it can become dry, fragile, and more likely to get injured. Dehydrated skin can also slow down wound healing.

Aim to drink about 6-8 glasses of fluid per day to stay hydrated, unless your doctor or specialist nurse has given you different advice.

Meal Ideas:

Main Meal Ideas:

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

Sandwich Fillings:

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

For extra calories and energy in your sandwiches, try adding mayonnaise or chutney.

Snacks Between Meals:

- Sandwich with any of the fillings listed above
- Yoghurt
- Hummus and breadsticks
- Nuts*
- Cheese and biscuits*
- Sausage roll*
- Pork pie*
- Scotch egg*

Desserts:

- Milk puddings (like 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 desserts like Angel Delight, made with your usual milk
- Mousse

Nourishing Drinks:

- Milk
- Milkshakes
- Hot chocolate, Horlicks, or Ovaltine, made with your usual milk
- Smoothies

*** These options are higher in calories and suitable for people who are at risk of malnutrition.**

Important Information for People with Diabetes:

If you have diabetes, it is important to know that poorly controlled blood sugar can slow down wound healing. Your medication may need to be adjusted to keep your blood sugar levels optimal. Please speak with your doctor, nurse, or dietitian if you need help with this.

Oral Nutritional Supplements:

If you are not eating enough food to help your wound heal, your GP or dietitian may recommend that you use oral nutritional supplement drinks to help promote wound healing.

Following the advice in this leaflet should help your wound healing. If you are not able to follow this advice or your wound does not heal, please contact your dietitian, district/practice nurse, tissue viability nurse, or GP for more support.

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

This leaflet has been created by the Sirona care & health Diabetes and Nutrition Services Community Dietitians, working with the Wound Care Service.

We want you and the people who help you to understand what we send. If you need help with this letter or leaflet please tell us.



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