



Patient/carer information: Food first - Eating well for wound healing

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

When a wound is healed, it may be necessary to stop following this advice to avoid unplanned weight gain.

Nutrition and healing Nutrition plays an essential role in treatment of wounds and in prevention and treatment of pressure ulcers.

To heal a wound the body needs more protein than usual and may also need more energy (calories) than usual too.

If enough 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 increases risk of illness and makes it harder for the body to fight infection and heal itself, so wounds may not continue to 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 leaflet "*Food First – Eating well for small appetites*" explains how to increase your energy intake (please ask your GP, Community Nurse or Dietitian for this leaflet) and the following information explains how to increase your protein intake.

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 as follows.

What do I need to eat? Our bodies need us to eat a range of different foods every day, which include:

- **Starchy carbohydrate** such as bread, pasta, rice, cereals, potatoes - Try to have a serving of starchy food at each meal
- **Fruit and vegetables** – Aim for 5 portions per day
- **Fluid** – Try to drink at least 6 - 8 glasses/mugs of fluid every day
- **Milk and milk based foods** such as yogurt, fromage frais, cheese – Try to have at least 2 - 3 servings per day
- **Protein foods** such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans/lentils, Quorn, soya – **see the following ideas to help you increase your protein intake, to aid wound healing:**

1. Have 1 portion of a high protein food at each meal, such as:

- Meat
- Fish
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Milk (e.g. with breakfast cereal)
- Nuts
- Beans/pulses
- Quorn/ Soya

2. Choose high protein sandwich fillings, such as:

- Meat
- Tinned fish
- Egg
- Cheese
- Peanut butter

3. Choose desserts containing a source of protein, such as:

- Milk puddings e.g. rice pudding and semolina
- Custard
- Yogurt

4. Choose more drinks based on milk, such as:

- Milk
- Milkshakes
- Hot chocolate/ Horlicks/ Ovaltine made with milk
- Milky coffee

5. Choose high protein between meal snacks, such as:

- Yogurt
- Nuts
- Sandwich containing high protein filling (*see above*)
- Cheese and biscuits *
- Sausage roll *
- Pork pie *
- Scotch egg *

* These options are high calorie and are suitable for those at risk of malnutrition

6. If you are at risk of malnutrition, fortify your food with high calorie and protein ingredients, such as:

- Dried, skimmed milk powder
- Yoghurt
- Cheese
- Ground almonds

7. If you are not at risk of malnutrition and do not need to eat a lot of extra calories, choose lower calorie versions of high protein foods such as:

- Skimmed or semi skimmed milk
- Reduced fat cheese
- Low fat, very low fat or diet yoghurts/fromage frais
- Custard and milk puddings made with semi skimmed or skimmed milk
- Lean meat
- Eggs
- Fish
- Quorn/soya/tofu
- Beans/pulses

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 or Practice Nurse, Tissue Viability Nurse or GP for further support.

Leaflet provided by:

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Profession:.....

Contact number:.....

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Date:.....

Developed by	Alison Smith, Prescribing Support Dietitian, Aylesbury Vale & Chiltern CCGs
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