

## Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

# Dietary information to promote wound healing

Nutrition is an important part of recovery especially in the healing of traumatic injuries, surgical wounds, or pressure sores. Your body needs extra protein, zinc, and vitamins (especially vitamins C and D) to help heal bones and skin. Taking enough protein can also help your muscles get stronger for physiotherapy.

Nutrient	Reason	Examples
<b>Protein</b>	Helps to maintain and repair body tissues.	Meat, poultry, fish dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs, soya, Quorn®, tofu, nuts and seeds, pulse vegetables such as beans, chickpeas, and lentils.
<b>Iron</b>	Iron is important for the healing. It helps to maintain blood haemoglobin levels.	Meat, fish, and eggs. Iron is also found in other food such as beans, pulses, green vegetables, and dried fruit, but these are less easily absorbed. If you drink tea, do so between meals rather than with your meals as tea contains tannins, which reduce the absorption of iron.



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Nutrient	Reason	Examples
<b>Vitamin C</b>	Vitamin C helps with the absorption of iron from your food and with the healing process. It is not stored in the body, so is needed every day.	Vitamin C is found in a wide variety of fruit and vegetables. Vitamin C is destroyed during the cooking process, so it is important not to overcook your vegetables, or if possible, steam them.  Drinking a small glass of fruit juice (150ml) with your meal is a good way to improve your intake. If your vitamin C intake remains low, you may need to take a supplement.
<b>Zinc</b>	Zinc is important for making new skin tissue and to help wounds to heal.	Red meat, shellfish, milk, cheese, bread, lentils, beans, pumpkin seeds, and cereal products such as wheat germ.

## Advice for whilst you are in hospital

In hospital you will be served 3 meals and 2 snacks every day. You can take more protein by making good menu choices.

### To increase the protein in your main hospital meals try having:

- A high protein food in every meal: meat, fish, beans, cheese, egg, soya products or meat alternatives.
- A cooked breakfast – this can be ordered by a dietitian or dietetic assistant for patients who need it.
- Milky puddings like custard or rice pudding instead of jelly or fruit.
- Extra milk, cheese sauce, or cheese on your meal.
- A glass of milk or a milk-based hot drink such as hot chocolate or Horlicks instead of a cup of tea, coffee, or water.

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### Choose protein rich snacks from the snack trolley including:

- Yoghurt, rice pudding, custard pots, soya yoghurts or cheese and crackers.

Soya milk and yoghurts are available on request.

### What can the ward staff give you?

There are products available, not on the menu, which the ward staff can give without needing a prescription. Please ask:

- 'Complan' milkshake available in Strawberry, Chocolate and Vanilla flavour.
- 'Complan' soup available in Vegetable and Chicken flavour.

### When to ask for help

- If you are having difficulty using cutlery, cutting up your food or **feeding yourself**, ask ward staff to help. An occupational therapist can help by offering you special cutlery in hospital and at home.
- If you have a **sore mouth** or lips and this is affecting your eating, speak to your nurse or doctor about treatments that may help.
- If you are having trouble **swallowing** your food and/or drink, speak with your nurse or doctor who can refer you to a speech and language therapist who can assess your swallow.
- **You may have constipation** because of medications and because you may be moving around less. Drinking fluids and increasing fibre can help, you might need laxatives as well.

High fibre foods to choose: (\*some options not available on hospital menu but can be bought in): fruit, \*dried fruits, vegetables, \*Bran flakes®, Weetabix®, muesli, Ready Brek®, jacket potatoes (skin on), wholemeal bread, \*nuts, beans, and pulses.

If you need to know more about fibre, see "How to eat more fibre", you can get this from your dietitian.

### **Other considerations**

- If you have diabetes, having good control of blood sugar levels will help with wound healing and may prevent infection.
- If you can't eat a varied diet, or aren't eating enough, an "A to Z" type vitamin and mineral supplements can be helpful and can be bought from chemists or supermarkets.
- Your friends or family can bring food into hospital for you. Please note that food can't be reheated on the ward.

### **Nutritional supplements on prescription**

You should be weighed in hospital on admission, and every week afterwards. If your body mass index (weight compared to your height) is low, you have lost a significant amount of weight in the last 3 to 6 months, or you are not eating enough for 5 or more days, you may be prescribed nutritional supplements. If your eating and drinking doesn't get better or if your wound is not healing the ward might ask a dietitian to see you.

- Supplements come in lots of flavours. Ask to try different ones as you may like one more than another.
- There is milk and non-milk-based supplements available.
- If you find the supplement too thick: Milky supplements can be made thinner with milk and non-milk supplements diluted with water, lemonade, tonic or similar.
- Supplements that are larger can be taken in smaller parts through the day. It is best not to take the mound mealtimes to stop you feeling full.
- You might like supplements cold. Ask the nursing staff to get one from the fridge.
- Recipe cards are available for some nutritional supplements. Ask your dietitian for more information.

## When you are discharged from hospital

### Advice when choosing high protein options at home

If you are asked to carry on having a high protein diet by your Dietitian or another healthcare professional when you return home, here are some more ideas:

Meal/ small meal ideas	Snacks and Nutritious Drinks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandwich, wrap, roll or pitta with egg mayonnaise, ham, cheese, tuna mayonnaise, coronation chicken, bacon, sausage, or nut butter.</li> <li>• Jacket potato with tuna, salmon, cheese, and/ or beans.</li> <li>• Samosas or Pakoras</li> <li>• Chicken, beef or bean burger.</li> <li>• Toast with peanut butter, pate, houmous, and cream cheese.</li> <li>• Fish finger sandwiches.</li> <li>• Boiled, scrambled, poached or fried egg on toast.</li> <li>• Omelette with ham, cheese and mushrooms.</li> <li>• Baked beans on toast.</li> <li>• Sardines or pilchards on toast.</li> <li>• Quinoa, bulgar or spelt in place of rice or pasta served with chilli carne for example.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheese, cheese spread or cream cheese with breadsticks or crackers.</li> <li>• Nuts and seeds: add these to salads, soups, cereals, and puddings.</li> <li>• High protein cereal and nut bars.</li> <li>• Pork scratchings</li> <li>• Dried Meat Jerky/Pierogi</li> <li>• Milk based puddings such as: rice pudding, crème caramel, mousse, semolina. You could try custard with sponge pudding, a banana or tinned fruit.</li> <li>• Dairy-free milk and pudding alternatives (Soya and almond based are likely to be highest in protein)</li> <li>• Bread sticks or nachos with houmous/ bean dips.</li> <li>• Thick and creamy fruit yoghurt or fromage frais or Quark based desserts.</li> <li>• Homemade or shop bought milkshakes and yoghurt smoothies.</li> <li>• Milk and hot chocolate, milky coffee, malted drinks such as Ovaltine® and Horlicks®.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tuna and crackers.</li><li>• Meat or fish soup with bread.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fortify milk with milk powder (2-4tbsp per pint of milk).</li><li>• Slice of pizza or quiche.</li><li>• Pork pie, sausage roll, scotches eggs.</li></ul>
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REMEMBER: when choosing foods, you may want to take more higher fibre foods if you are struggling to go the toilet and open your bowels. Include foods rich in Zinc, iron, vitamin C and D to help with wound healing.

For more information on dietary advice for pressure ulcers:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/pressure-ulcers-pressure-sores-diet.html>

If you have experienced weight loss, or your weight continues to reduce:

<https://patientwebinars.co.uk/condition/malnutrition/>

## When to contact a health professional?

As you get better you should weigh yourself weekly. Aim to keep your weight the same. If your weight continues goes down or your wound is not healing, contact your GP who can see if you need more support from the Dietitians.

## Choosing a balanced diet at home

If your injuries have healed, your weight is staying the same and you are eating and drinking normally, you don't need to follow a high protein diet anymore. You should follow a healthy balanced diet for your long-term health.

For more information on achieving a healthy BMI and following a healthy balanced diet for your long-term health: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well)

## Further notes

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**Your Dietitian is:**

**Contact number:**

- 024 76966161 (University Hospital)
- 01788663473 (Hospital of St Cross, Rugby)

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, we will do our best to meet your needs. Please contact 024 7696 6161.

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