

Eating Well for Wound Healing

How does good nutrition help wound healing?

Eating well during wound healing helps you heal faster and fight infection. During healing your body needs more calories, protein, fluid, vitamin A, vitamin C, and zinc.

The **best** source of these nutrients is food. If you are not eating enough healthy food, you may need to take a supplement. Ask your healthcare provider about taking a nutrition supplement drink and/or a multi-vitamin pill.

If you have diabetes, kidney disease, or if you need to limit your fluids, talk to your dietitian before following the tips in this handout.

Eat a variety of healthy foods

Follow Canada's Food Guide (HealthyCanadians.gc.ca/FoodGuide) to eat a variety of foods every day. Choose foods from the 4 food groups at meals and snacks:

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives

Calories

Your body needs extra calories (energy from food) while your wound heals. It's important to eat enough so you don't lose weight. If your appetite is poor, it may help to eat smaller meals more often, and eat snacks between meals.

Ask your dietitian for easy, higher calorie meal and snack ideas if you feel you are not eating enough food or are losing weight without trying.

Protein

You need more protein for wound healing. Protein helps you build and maintain muscle, heal tissue, and have a healthy immune system. Try to eat protein foods at each meal and snack.

Choose these protein foods:

- cheese
- cottage cheese
- eggs
- fortified soy beverage
- meat, poultry, or fish
- milk
- tofu
- yogurt



To learn more, see *Adding Protein to Your Diet*: <http://www.ahs.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-adding-protein-to-your-diet.pdf>

Fluid

Your body needs more fluid to keep your skin healthy for wound healing. Some examples of fluid are:

- water
- milk or fortified soy beverage
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- soup
- coffee or tea



Water is the best source of fluid. When you have a poor appetite, choose milk or smoothies more often.

Plan drinks into your day, as your body may not always tell you when it's thirsty. Most adults need 9–12 cups (2.25–3 L) of fluid each day. Drink fluids between meals or at the end of each meal. This may help you feel hungrier at meals and eat more.

Keep a glass of water or water bottle near you all day. Wash your water bottle in warm soapy water after each use.

Vitamins and minerals

Vitamin A, vitamin C and zinc help your body to repair tissue damage, fight infections, and keep your skin healthy. Try to eat foods from the lists below.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is found in animal foods and some brightly coloured vegetables and fruits.



Foods with vitamin A:

- apricot
- cantaloupe
- carrots
- cheese
- eggs
- leafy greens
- liver
- mango
- milk
- papaya
- pumpkin
- sweet potato

Vitamin C

Many vegetables and fruits are high in vitamin C. Eat more bright orange, red, and green vegetables and fruits.



Foods with vitamin C:

- broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- cantaloupe
- citrus fruits (oranges)
- kiwi
- papaya
- potato with skin
- strawberries
- sweet bell pepper
- tomatoes
- 100% fruit juice

Zinc

Zinc is a mineral that is found mostly in animal foods.



Foods with zinc:

- eggs
- fish
- legumes (beans, lentils)
- liver
- meat
- milk
- nuts and seeds
- poultry
- seafood (oysters, crab, clams)
- whole grain foods (brown rice, cereals, oatmeal, barley)

Diabetes and wound healing

Good blood sugar control is very important during wound healing. This helps you heal faster and reduces the risk of wound infection. Please ask your dietitian for tips on managing your blood sugar.

Remember:

Eat a wide variety of foods every day to get the **calories, protein, fluid, vitamins, and minerals** you need to heal your skin and keep it healthy.