A guide for patients about eating to promote wound healing

Why is eating well important?
Nutrition and hydration play an important role in wound healing. Good nutrition can help wounds and pressure ulcers to heal quicker. If you have a wound or pressure ulcer you need more protein and calories in your diet to promote healing.

- If you have a poor appetite, or are losing weight, eating enough calories and protein is more important than healthy eating.
- If you are overweight then aim to maintain your weight while you heal.
- If you have diabetes good blood glucose control is important to promote healing.

How can you eat well?
Try to have a varied diet to get as wide a range of nutrients as possible. Aim for at least two to three portions of protein rich foods daily. These foods include meat, fish, poultry, cheese, eggs, pulses and dairy products.

If you have a small appetite, you may find it easier to eat little and often. You may find three small meals with snacks in between easier to manage.

Light meal ideas include a jacket potato with tuna or baked beans, creamy soup with bread and butter or scrambled eggs on toast. Meals don’t have to be hot; a sandwich with a protein filling is fine to have.

Good snack ideas are yoghurt, cheese and biscuits, peanut butter on toast, a buttered teacake or a crumpet or muffin with cream cheese.

Milk is also a good source of protein so it’s a good idea to aim to have a pint a day. Full fat milk gives the most calories although all types of milk have the same protein content.

Having a good intake of vitamins and minerals is also important if you have a wound or pressure ulcer. If you have a small appetite and are not managing a variety of foods talk to your dietitian about a vitamin and mineral supplement.

What about drinks?
As we get older the thirst mechanism is reduced, which means we may not feel thirsty as often. Dehydration can slow down skin healing, so it is important to drink regularly throughout the day, even if you don’t feel thirsty. Aim for eight drinks a day. All drinks, except alcohol, count towards your fluid intake. Try to have a glass of fruit juice daily too to provide vitamin C which helps with wound healing.

If you have a small appetite you may find that drinks taken with or close to meals fill you up too much. Try having your drinks after you eat if this is the case.

If you are finding it difficult to drink enough, try to eat some foods which contain a lot of fluid such as ice lollies, jelly, yogurts, milky puddings, soups and stews.

Further advice
If you have non-healing wounds, delayed wound healing or any concerns about your diet and would like some individual advice please ask your GP, practice nurse or community nurse to refer you to the Dietetic Department for an appointment.
If you need communication support, an interpreter or this information in another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read or large print, please ask a member of staff.

You will be asked for your agreement to treatment and, if necessary, your permission to share your personal information.

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