

Nutrition and Wound Healing



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Surgical wounds and pressure ulcers are two types of wounds that occur in patients. A surgical wound is from an incision during a surgery or for a test. Pressure ulcers, also called “bed sores”, may form from the lack of movement or sensation, poor nutrition, poor circulation or not being able to control bowel or bladder function. **Good nutrition is needed to help heal both types of wounds.**

What you need to know

Eating a variety of healthy foods is needed for wound healing. Your body needs more calories, protein, vitamins A and C, and the mineral zinc to help with the healing process.

- **Increase the amount of calories you eat.** If you are overweight, talk to your doctor or a dietitian about the amount of calories you should eat.
 - Eat 4 to 6 small meals a day.
 - Eat a variety of foods for a balanced diet, so you get enough calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals.
- **Increase your protein intake.** Your body needs extra protein to heal your wounds.
 - Eat at least 2 to 3 servings each day. A serving equals 2 to 3 ounces of meat, 1 cup of cooked beans, 1 egg, or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter.
 - Eat protein-rich foods at every meal and snack. Foods high in protein include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, beans, nuts, and soy foods.
 - Protein supplements, such as powders or liquids like Ensure, can help you get enough protein.
- **Get enough vitamins A and C, and the mineral zinc.** Try to eat foods that have these vitamins and minerals in them. Eating a balanced diet should help you get enough vitamins and minerals.
 - Good sources of vitamin A include: liver, egg, sweet potato, carrot, peas, broccoli, kale, spinach, collard greens, pumpkin, winter squash, cantaloupe, apricot, papaya and mango. **Eat at least 1 serving a day.**
 - Good sources of vitamin C include: citrus fruits, orange juice, tropical fruits, such as guava, papaya, and mango, red and green peppers, broccoli, spinach, collard greens, strawberries, tomatoes and peas. **Eat at least 1 serving a day.**
 - Good sources of zinc include: meat, poultry, some seafood, like lobster and crab, liver, eggs, milk, whole grains, tofu and fortified cereals.
- **Take a daily multivitamin that is for your age and gender.**



- **Control your blood sugar.** High blood sugar makes it harder for your wound to heal. Check your blood sugar levels as directed if you have diabetes or if you have a history of high blood sugar levels.
- **Drink plenty of fluids** unless directed otherwise by your doctor. Drink at least 8, 8-ounce cups of caffeine-free liquid each day. Water is best.

Sample menu

Meal or Snack	Food	Grams (g) of Protein
Breakfast	2 scrambled eggs cooked in 1 teaspoon olive oil	14
	1 to 2 slices whole grain toast with 1 teaspoon butter	3 to 6
	1 cup sliced strawberries or orange	0
Snack	1 container Greek yogurt with less than 10 grams of sugar	10 to 15
Lunch	1/2 sandwich with:	
	3 ounces baked meat or poultry	21
	1 slice cheese	7
	Tomato, onion, and lettuce	0
	1 teaspoon lite mayonnaise	0
	1 cup slice vegetables, such as peppers and carrots, with:	0
	1/4 cup hummus, or	4
	2 tablespoons lite ranch dressing	0
	1 small orange or apple	0
Snack	1 cup cottage cheese	25
	1/2 cup pineapple chunks	0
Dinner	3 to 5 ounces grilled, broiled, or baked meat, poultry, or fish	21 to 35
	1 cup cooked broccoli with 2 teaspoons olive oil or butter	3
	1 medium baked sweet potato	3
Snack	1/4 cup any type of nuts	7
	1 cup diced cantaloupe	0
Total grams of protein =		120 to 139

If you would like more help to meet your nutrition goals, ask your doctor for a referral to see a Registered Dietitian (RD).