

## Eat well, heal well: Wound healing and nutrition

### Why does nutrition help with wound healing?

Nutrition plays an important role in helping any wounds heal, whether you are recovering from surgery, have pressure sores or leg ulcers.

Good nutrition can help the healing process, whilst poor nutrition could delay or even stop wounds healing.

Many nutrients and food groups play specific roles in wound healing; this leaflet will help you to make good food choices to optimise nutrition during the healing process.

### Food groups and nutrients important in wound healing

On page 3 of this information leaflet is the 'Eat Well Guide', which shows the balance of different food groups to aim for in our diet.

The 'Eat Well Guide' is what the following information is based on.

#### Meat fish and alternatives

These foods are sources of protein, which helps maintain and repair body tissue. Not eating enough protein can slow the wound healing process.

Aim to have at least one portion with each meal.

Examples of foods	Portion sizes
Meat and poultry	X1 deck of playing cards
Eggs	X2 medium sized
Fish and shellfish	X2 deck of playing cards
Beans and pulses	X5 tablespoons
Vegetarian alternatives (Tofu, Quorn etc.)	X2 Quorn sausages

#### Starchy foods

These foods are our main source of energy. Healing needs a lot of energy, mostly to repair the damaged tissue and make new skin.

Aim to have at least one portion with each meal.

Examples of foods	Portion Sizes
Bread, bagels, tortilla wraps, chapattis	X2 slices medium thickness bread, X1 bagel, chapatti or tortilla wrap.
Pasta, noodles	X6 heaped tablespoons (cooked)
Rice	X4 heaped tablespoons (cooked)
Breakfast cereals	X6 heaped tablespoons
Potatoes	X4 egg sized

## Fruit and vegetables

These foods are rich in vitamins and minerals. Several vitamins and minerals have important roles in the wound healing process.

Aim to have at least 5 portions every day.

Examples of foods	Portion sizes
Fresh fruit and vegetables	X1 handful
Dried fruit	X1 tablespoon
Tinned fruits and vegetables	X1 handful
Frozen fruits and vegetables	X1 handful

## Dairy Products and alternatives

These foods are a good source of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals, see above sections for their role in wound healing.

Aim to have 3 portions every day

Examples of foods	Portion sizes
Milk	1/3 pint or 200ml
All types of cheese	Small match box
Yoghurt	1 small pot
Vegan dairy alternatives (with added calcium)	As above

## Fluid

Dehydration can reduce the ability of your wound healing.

Examples of fluid	Portion sizes
Water	Try to have 8 glasses each day.
Squash/fizzy drinks	Have more fluid if it is a hot day and/or you are losing fluid from your wound
Tea/coffee	

## Remember

It is not always appropriate for you to follow diets that restrict food intake, such as diets to reduce weight or cholesterol, or diets that avoid whole food groups (for example low carbohydrate diets) while your wound is healing.

If you have diabetes; you need adequate carbohydrates for wound healing. However good control of blood sugar levels is also important, so your diabetes therapy may need to be adjusted while the wound is healing. Check with your Doctor, Diabetes Specialist Nurse, or Dietitian.

If you are underweight, losing weight (unintentionally), or have a poor appetite then speak with the healthcare professional who gave you this information leaflet for more specific advice on eating well with a poor appetite.

# 'The Eat Well Guide'

## Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.  
Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains	
Energy	1046kJ
Fat	3.0g
Saturated	1.3g
Sugar	34g
Salt	0.9g
LOW	7%
LOW	4%
HIGH	38%
HIGH	15%

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/167kcal of an adult's reference intake

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Eat less often and in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland © Crown copyright 2016

## Sources of information

- East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust Nutrition and Dietetic department
- NHS choices
- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide)
- [nhs.stopthepressure.co.uk](http://nhs.stopthepressure.co.uk)

## Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

**Tel: (01424) 755255 Ext: 2620**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Reference

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:  
Nutrition and Dietetic Department  
01424 755255 Ext.8640  
01323 417400 Ext. 4172

Next review date: January 2021  
Responsible clinician/author: Rebecca Hay, Specialist Surgical Dietitian

© East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust – [www.esht.nhs.uk](http://www.esht.nhs.uk)