





trigger a zinc deficiency. Zinc is abundant in protein-rich foods such as meat, oysters, and liver.

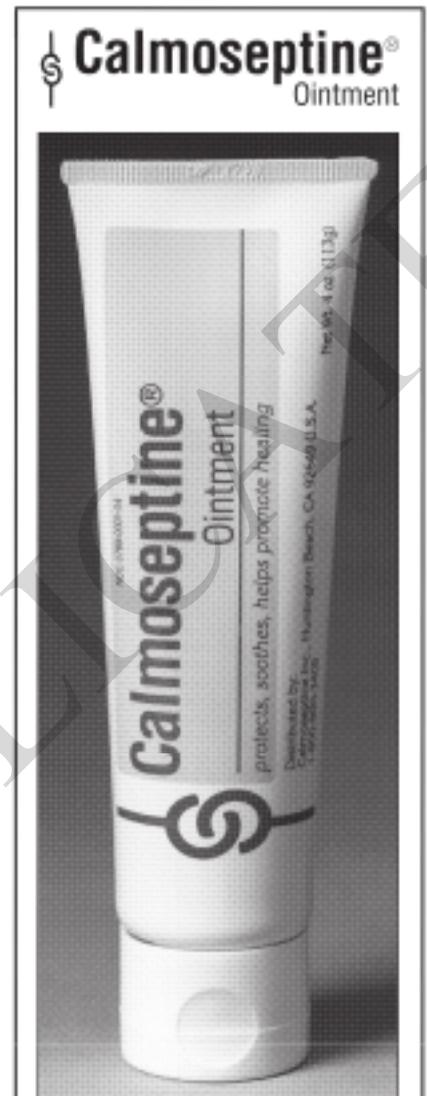
**Vitamin A and copper.** Vitamin A and copper also contribute to the wound-healing process.<sup>5,7,8</sup> Vitamin A stimulates the immune system, maintains mucosal and epithelial integrity, and increases collagen formation. Dietary sources of retinol, the active form of vitamin A, include fortified milk, cheese, cream, butter, margarine, eggs, liver, and fish-liver oil. Dietary sources of beta-carotene, a precursor to vitamin A that is converted in the body, include dark-green leafy vegetables, deep orange fruits and vegetables, spinach, broccoli, cantaloupe, carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and winter squash. Copper is important for the production of enzymes involved in the cross-linking of connective tissue.<sup>5</sup> The best dietary sources of copper are organ meats, seafood, nuts, seeds, and dark-green leafy vegetables. Table 1 summarizes the risk factors for deficiency of these four key nutrients.

### Practice Points

Optimal nutrition plays a role in the treatment and prevention of pressure ulcers. It is imperative to identify malnutrition early and implement appropriate strategies for correcting nutritional deficits. Healthcare professionals should monitor dietary patterns frequently to ensure nutrition interventions are modified as patients' conditions change. It is of utmost importance that patients meet their protein and energy requirements. Well-balanced meals that include carbohydrates, protein, fat, and adequate vitamins and minerals should be encouraged. If patients are unable to meet their nutrient needs through daily intake, an oral nutrition supplement would prove beneficial. Incorporating nutrition as part of the overall treatment plan promotes healing, decreases treatment duration, and improves overall quality of life. ■

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