

# Nutrition and Wound Healing

Surgical ulcers 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.** Eating too little protein can delay or affect how well the wound heals.
  - ▶ 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.
  - ▶ Try to eat protein-rich foods at every meal and snack. Foods high in protein include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, peas, nuts and soy foods. Dry beans, such as black, kidney and pinto beans, are also good sources of protein.

More on next page →

Learn more about your health care.

- ▶ Protein supplements, such as powders or liquids like Ensure, may be needed for people with poor nutrition or for people who cannot eat enough protein.
  - ▶ Please see the **Protein Content in Foods and Supplements** handout for more information.
  - **Get enough vitamins A and C, and the mineral zinc.** Eating a balanced diet should help you get enough vitamins and minerals. However, your doctor may ask you to take a multivitamin or supplement.
    - ▶ 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.
  - **Control your blood sugar.** High blood sugar can make 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.
- ❖ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**