

Eating well for wound healing and preventing skin breakdown in hospital

Information for patients
& carers



The following information provides dietary advice for wound healing and preventing skin breakdown for patients in hospital.

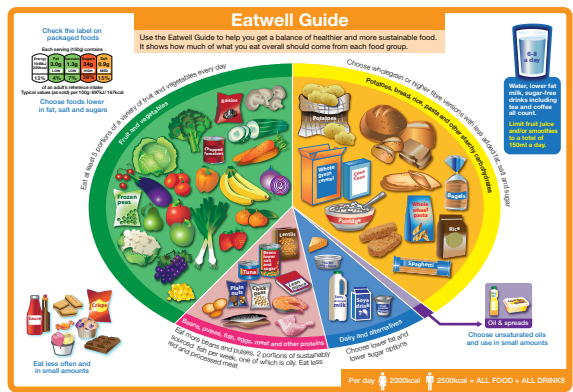
Food and drink play a key role in keeping skin healthy and preventing skin breakdown. Eating a well-balanced diet is more likely to contain the nutrients needed to help heal wounds and pressure ulcers. Being poorly nourished can increase the risk of developing pressure ulcers and may mean it takes longer for the wound the heal.

You may be at risk of skin breakdown or poor healing of wounds if you are:

- a low weight or have had unplanned weight loss
- unable to eat without help from others
- not getting the correct nutrients from your diet
- overweight or obese

A balanced diet

The “Eatwell Guide” shows the different types of food groups we need for a balanced diet. It shows how much you should eat from each food group. Eating a balanced diet with enough energy (calories) and protein is essential for wound healing.



The **pink section** contains protein-rich foods which are important for wound healing. Aim to have protein at each meal and include drinks made with milk.

Beans



Nuts



Eggs



Fish



Meat



Pulses



Dairy



Milk



The **green section** contains foods rich in vitamins and minerals which are also important for wound healing. Aim to eat 5 portions a day.

Fruit



Vegetables



Fruit Juice



If you have a poor appetite and are not eating well, the balance of the food groups may need to be changed. This will ensure you get the correct amount of energy and nutrients from your diet to heal your wounds.

Hospital Menu

As well as the usual adult menu, there are menus to meet cultural or religious needs and preferences. These include finger foods, Kosher, African Caribbean and Multicultural menus. There are also menus to meet medical needs. Please inform your nurse about your food preferences and choice so that the best menu for you can be provided.

Menu items are coded with the following:

GF - Gluten Free

V - Vegetarian

Vg - Vegan

EC - Easy Chew

↑ - Higher energy - suitable if you have a small appetite or require foods higher in energy



- Healthy Heart

Between Meals

It can be helpful to snack between meals on foods such as rice pudding, custard and biscuits along with cheese and crackers together with milk to get more energy (calories) and protein in your diet.

Assistance to eat and drink

Adapted crockery is available to make eating easier. Please inform your nurse if you think you would benefit from this.

Ward staff are available if you need help with eating and drinking. This can be physical help, encouragement or prompting. The ward's visiting hours over meal times allows friends and family to help and encourage with eating and drinking if needed.

Fluid

Dehydrated skin can become dry and fragile therefore drinking enough fluid is very important. Aim to have 6-8 drinks (1.5 litres) per day.



This may include nourishing drinks such as malted milk, fruit juice, hot chocolate or milky coffee.

Poor appetite

If you have a small appetite or need foods high in energy and protein due to your illness, weight loss or surgery, try the following:

- have three meals and two snacks per day
- choose higher-energy foods, marked with a " ↑ " symbol on the menu
- include two nourishing drinks each day e.g. milk, malted milk, fruit juice, hot chocolate or milky coffee
- include protein rich foods at every meal and snack e.g. meat, fish, eggs, beans pulses or dairy foods
- don't rush your meal and snacks - take your time
- avoid drinking lots of fluid just before your meals as this may reduce your appetite. Drink plenty at other times of the day


- family or friends are welcome to bring in nourishing, non-perishable foods from home e.g. chocolate, biscuits, crisps, bottled drinks etc.

You may be prescribed nutritional supplement drinks from your doctor or dietitian. These are rich in energy (calories), protein, vitamins and minerals.

Overweight

If you are overweight, losing weight could help reduce the risk of skin breakdown and pressure ulcers. However, if you restrict your intake too much *whilst* a wound or pressure ulcer is healing, it could delay the healing process.

If your appetite is good and you are eating well Simple changes that you could make to your diet if you are overweight are:

- choosing  healthier choices on the main menu. These foods are lower in salt, fat and sugar
- opting for snacks that are lower in fat eg fresh fruit, no added sugar custard and milk

Diabetes

Good glucose control is essential to help heal wounds. Adjustment of your diabetes medication and regular blood glucose testing may be needed to help you achieve this. Try to avoid very sugary food and drinks. Instead choose higher protein items e.g no added sugar custards and milk. Contact your doctor, nurse or dietitian for further advice especially if you take tablets or insulin to control your blood glucose levels.

Nutrition and hydration top tips

Overall the **5 most important things** you can do to help wound healing and prevent skin breakdown in hospital are:

1. Stay hydrated - aim to have 6-8 drinks each day (unless advised by medical team) - this could include milk, tea, coffee, juice or water.
2. Make sure you are having enough protein. Include protein-rich foods at each meal, for example, meat, fish, beans, pulses, eggs, dairy, soy, at each meal.
3. Ask for assistance or help with eating and drinking if needed.
4. Order from the hospital menu that best meets your religious or cultural needs, or dietary preferences.
5. If your appetite is poor, try to have three meals and 2 nourishing snacks each day.



If you have any questions or concerns about your nutritional status or the information above, please speak to member of the nursing staff.



If you have any queries please contact:

Dietitian

Contact number

If you have any suggestions or comments regarding this leaflet please let your dietitian know.

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