

## Why is Diet Important for Wound Healing?

A healthy, balanced diet has been shown to be very important in normal wound healing because the body needs various nutrients to repair injured tissue. Common examples of wounds include diabetic foot ulcers, pressure ulcers, and surgical wounds. Healthy diets should include lean meat, plant-based proteins, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and whole grains. You may benefit from increasing your intake of calories, protein, and certain amino acids such as arginine. Make sure you are taking in adequate amounts of zinc and vitamins A, C, and D. In addition, it is important that you stay well hydrated to ensure that your body can transport these nutrients to the sites of injury.

## contact us

ECU PHYSICIANS FAMILY  
MEDICINE CENTER

101 HEART DR.  
GREENVILLE, NC 27834

(252)744-4611

## Look Out for Signs of Wound Infection.

It is important to contact your doctor if you begin to notice signs of the wound becoming infected. This could lead to things like an infection of the blood stream which can be life-threatening if not treated promptly.

Signs to look out for:

- Wound is getting larger, more red, more painful, or warm to the touch.
- Wound starts draining fluid or develops a foul smell.
- You begin to feel sick or develop a fever

# Diet for Wound Healing

is more important than you might think

PREPARED BY:

BHAVNA ANEJA, MS, RDN  
SUKHMAN GREWAL, MS  
JONATHAN LECRONE, MS  
ALEXANDER YOUNG, MS  
DEREK SCHAAP, MS  
KATHRYN KOLASA, PHD, LDN  
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## What Do I Need to Do?

Talk to your doctor about your nutrition. They may want to get blood tests or refer you to a licensed dietitian. Your doctor and dietitian can guide you to choices that meet your needs based on your lifestyle and health.

**Blood sugar:** High blood sugar levels make it harder for wounds to heal. Check your blood sugar levels as directed if you have diabetes or a history of high blood sugar. Speak with your licensed dietitian for food strategies to control your blood sugar.

**Arginine:** Supplements may be beneficial in healing severe pressure wounds. These supplements may be purchased as powders at health food stores. Ask your physician before trying one.

**Calories:** You should eat just enough calories to maintain a healthy weight. If you are malnourished, injured, or at risk for pressure ulcers however, you may benefit from an increased caloric intake. Specific recommendations should be given by a dietitian based on your age, sex, and lifestyle.

**Protein:** Protein helps support the body's immune system and rebuild skin and other tissue. An adult at risk of developing pressure ulcers or with malnutrition may benefit from 0.5-0.7 grams of protein per pound of body weight daily. This is around 75-100 grams of protein per day for a 150 pound adult. For reference, an 8oz glass of milk has 7.3 grams of protein and an egg has 6 grams. Other healthy choices for foods high in protein include lean meats, beans, eggs, yogurt (particularly greek yogurt), tofu, soy, and nuts.

**Zinc:** If your zinc levels are low, you may benefit from supplementation. It can however be harmful if you take more than 40 milligrams per day. Natural sources of zinc include meat, poultry, liver, eggs, milk, whole grains, nuts, tofu, fortified cereals, and seafood like lobster and crab. Talk to your doctor before taking zinc supplements.

**Vitamin C:** If you do not regularly eat fruits and vegetables, you may benefit from taking a vitamin C supplement. Good food sources include citrus fruits, potatoes, dark green vegetables, strawberries, and tomatoes.

**Vitamin A:** If you have had vitamin A deficiency in the past, you may benefit from vitamin A supplementation. Vitamin A can be harmful if taken in large doses or for a long time though. For this reason, it is good to check with your doctor before taking a vitamin A supplement. Good food sources of vitamin A include liver, egg, sweet potato, carrots, peas, broccoli, kale, spinach, collard greens, pumpkin, cantaloupe, apricot, papaya, and mango.

**Vitamin D:** If you have low vitamin D levels you may benefit from a supplement. Vitamin D promotes wound healing by decreasing inflammation and helping with new skin and blood vessel formation. Vitamin D can also be harmful in large amounts. Your doctor can help you determine if a Vitamin D supplement is necessary.