

Patient information

Nutrition and Pressure Ulcers

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

- Pressure ulcers are caused when pressure causes damage to the skin and underlying tissues.
- Good nutrition and hydration help to keep the skin healthy and more resistant to ulcers.
- Pressure ulcers are more likely to occur in either overweight or underweight individuals.
- When you are underweight or have lost weight, it is likely that there is less ‘cushioning’ around the bones due to reduced fat stores and therefore tissue damage can occur more easily.
- When you are overweight there is increased pressure on certain areas of the body, again increasing the risk of pressure ulcers developing.
- This leaflet contains useful ideas on how to achieve a balanced diet to prevent the development of pressure ulcers and improve their healing.
- The information contained is suitable for those with a reduced appetite or those who need to gain weight, as well as those with a healthy/increased body weight. If you require a special diet the information in this leaflet may not be suitable for you. Please check with your dietitian.

Helpful hints on eating well.

You can achieve a healthy, balanced diet by choosing a wide variety of foods and eating these in the right proportions as shown below:



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Protein sources

- Protein is essential in helping the body to form new tissue and repair damaged tissue.
- If the diet lacks protein, skin tissues become weaker and slower to heal.
- To make sure you are eating enough protein, try to have protein foods 3 times per day, for example:
 - Lean meat or poultry, e.g. beef, pork, chicken, ham.
 - Fresh or tinned fish.
 - Dairy products such as cheese, milk, yoghurt, cream.
 - Eggs, beans, pulses, and other vegetarian protein sources, such as Quorn, tofu, soya.

Vitamins and minerals

- Vitamin C and zinc are important in the formation of new skin tissue and healing.
- Fruit and vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals to help skin to heal.
- Good sources of **Vitamin C** include peppers, citrus fruits, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, strawberries, kiwis, and pineapple.
- **Zinc** can be found in liver, meat, fish, eggs, dairy foods, beans, brown rice, potatoes, and wholegrain cereals.
- Other vitamins and minerals such as iron also have important roles to play.
- Iron is required for collagen formation and to ensure good blood supply and oxygen transport to damaged tissue to assist healing.
- Rich sources of **iron** include liver, meat, poultry, oily fish, egg yolk, pulses, and dried fruit.

Making sure you are drinking enough fluid.

- When we become dehydrated our skin becomes less elastic and more fragile, making it more susceptible to breakdown.
- It is important to ensure that you drink enough fluid to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- This will help to keep your skin healthy and to improve wound healing.
- Aim for six to eight glasses of fluid per day.
- Helpful hints:
 - Keep a drink beside you at all times.
 - Milk and milk-based drinks also provide additional protein.
 - Fruit juices or smoothies are good sources of vitamins and minerals.

Advice for adults with reduced appetite

- If you have a reduced appetite or have lost weight, small changes can make a difference.
- A diet high in energy (calories) and protein can help to prevent weight loss and assist in keeping the skin healthy.

- Try to eat smaller, more frequent meals with regular snacks to boost your appetite.
- Adding protein and energy to your regular foods can help those with a reduced appetite, without increasing portion sizes (i.e., adding butter and cheese onto a jacket potato).

Helpful hints for a poor appetite:

- Try to use one pint of full fat milk daily; this can be used as a drink, added to hot drinks, in soups, sauces or puddings.
- Try to have puddings or desserts once or twice a day.
- Include high calorie snacks and foods such as chocolate, sweets, jam, syrup, sugar etc.
- Add grated cheese to soups, casseroles, mashed potato, and vegetables before serving.
- Add double cream to soups, sauces, mashed potato, and desserts.
- Add butter or margarine to vegetables, pasta, and scrambled eggs.
- Use extra oil when cooking.

Meal ideas for a poor appetite:

Small meal ideas

- 'Cream of' type soups with added protein and vegetables, such as chicken.
- Scrambled eggs on toast with tomato.
- Meat/lentil curry with vegetables and rice.
- Poached fish with white sauce, potatoes, and peas.
- Sandwich/roll filled with cheese/egg/ham/fish.

Snack ideas

- Crackers and cheese.
- Full fat yoghurt with biscuits.
- Teacake/scone with butter and cheese/jam.
- Pitta/naan bread with soft cheese or pate.

Pudding ideas

- Milky puddings such as rice pudding, tapioca, custard with added dried fruit/jam/honey.
- Individual desserts such as trifle, mousse, ice creams or full fat yoghurts.
- Cake/fruit pie/sponge pudding/tinned fruits with custard/ice cream/cream.
- Flapjack or muffin.

Nutritional Supplements

- Nutritional supplements may be prescribed by a doctor/dietitian.
- They are used as a supplement for those with a poor appetite or who need to increase their nutritional intake.
- Nutritional supplements are high in protein and calories which may help with the healing of pressure ulcers.
- There are many types of oral nutritional supplements available including: Milkshake or yoghurt-style supplements, juice-style supplements, desserts, savoury supplements and powders or liquids that can be added to foods to make them more nourishing.
- The availability of these supplements and whether they are required is based on certain criteria. This should be discussed with your dietitian or GP.

What if I'm overweight?

- Carrying extra weight places pressure on the body, especially if you are not very mobile.
- Body weight is determined by the amount of energy (calories) we take in (eat and drink) compared to the amount the body uses. Surplus energy is mostly stored as fat.
- To lose weight, the energy you take in must be less than the energy you use.
- Weight loss may not be appropriate if you are unwell and receiving treatment for pressure ulcers; instead aim to prevent further weight gain.
- Aim to achieve a healthy, balanced diet by choosing a wide variety of foods and eating these in the right proportions as in the diagram provided at the beginning of this leaflet.
- You should aim to:
 - Reduce your intake of fat and sugar.
 - Increase your intake of fruit, vegetables (aim for five a day).
 - Include plenty high fibre foods.
- Do not skip meals, this can lead to unbalanced diets or make you feel tired and hungrier.
- If you are unsure about your weight or require support, please speak to your GP or dietitian.

Additional information

If you have diabetes, please speak to your dietitian as some of this advice may not be suitable for you.

If you are concerned about weight loss or reduced appetite, please contact your GP or dietitian.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Nutrition and Dietetics Department
Aintree Hospital
Tel: 0151 529 3473

Royal Liverpool Hospital
Tel: 0151 706 2120

BDA
<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/pressure-ulcers-pressure-sores-diet.html>

NHS Choices
For information on pressure ulcers
<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pressure-ulcers/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

British Nutrition Foundation

For information on nutrition and healthy eating
<http://www.nutrition.org.uk/>

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