

Patient information

Diet and pressure injuries

Pressure injuries are areas of damage to the skin and the underlying tissue. Pressure injuries are primarily caused by prolonged pressure on the skin and usually form on bony parts of the body. The foods that you eat have a key role in healing the injury. There are some important nutrients that play a specific role in wound healing which are discussed below. You can get all these nutrients from a balanced diet which includes the following food groups: protein, starchy carbohydrates, five portions of fruit and vegetables, dairy or dairy alternatives and small amounts of healthy fats.

Protein

If you have a pressure injury, your body may require extra protein to help with the healing process. This can be especially important if your injury is weeping or there is a lot of pus.

Foods high in protein include meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, beans, and pulses. Try to have at least one of these foods at each meal.

Type of food	Portion size (weight)	Portion size guide
Animal protein		
Cooked meat (beef, pork, lamb, mince, chicken, turkey)	90g	A deck of cards
Cooked white fish (cod or plaice) or canned fish	140g	Palm of hand
Cooked oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines)	140g	Palm of hand
Eggs	120g	Two medium
Plant based protein		
Baked beans	150g	Four tablespoons
Beans (kidney beans, butterbeans, black eyed beans)	150g	Four tablespoons
Pulses (lentils, chickpeas)	150g	Four tablespoons

Soya/tofu, plant-based meat alternative	100g	Four tablespoons
Unsalted nuts or nut butter	30g	One handful or tablespoon

Try to have 1 pint of milk or milk alternative per day or a variety of milk and dairy foods such as milk puddings, cheese, or yoghurts. If you are overweight, you can use low fat versions. They contain the same amount of protein as full fat versions.

Type of food	Portion size (weight)	Portion size guide
Milk	200ml (1/3 pint)	One glass
Calcium fortified plant-based alternative	200ml (1/3 pint)	One glass
Yoghurt	125g-150g	One standard pot / three tablespoons
Cheese (hard)	30g	Small matchbox-sized piece

Iron

Iron has a role in maintaining adequate haemoglobin levels. Haemoglobin transport oxygen and other nutrients in the blood which helps the healing process. The table below shows foods which are good sources of iron. Iron from plant sources is less easily absorbed, however, taking vitamin C alongside iron rich foods will help your body absorb the iron in your food.

Animal based sources (haem iron)	Plant based sources (non-haem iron)
Beef	Pulses and legumes (such as beans, peas, and lentils)
Lamb	Dark green vegetables (such as spinach, kale and broccoli)
Pork	Nuts and seeds
Offal	Fortified breakfast cereals
	Dried fruit

Vitamin C

Getting enough Vitamin C is important to help with the healing of pressure injuries and it also improves the absorption of iron from beans, pulses, green vegetables, and dried fruit. Vitamin C is found especially in fruit and vegetables. Following healthy eating guidelines will ensure you are getting enough in your diet.

Vitamin C is not stored in the body so trying to take in enough each day is important.

Vitamin C is destroyed by cooking, so it is important not to overcook your vegetables.

If you are struggling to eat five portions of fruits and vegetables per day, talk to your health professional about how you can improve this.

Zinc

Zinc supports wound healing through its role in collagen formation, which helps form new tissue and support a healthy immune system. The table below shows which foods are good sources of zinc.

Animal based sources	Plant based sources
Meat	Wholemeal bread
Shellfish	Cereal products such as wheatgerm
Dairy products such as cheese	Nuts and seeds
Eggs	Fortified breakfast cereals
	Pulses and legumes (such as beans, peas, and lentils)

Fluid

It is important to drink enough fluid each day to help keep your skin in a good condition. You should aim for 2 litres per day (8-10 glasses). This could include any liquid except alcohol. If there is a lot of fluid loss from your pressure injury, you may need more fluid than this.

Body weight

Advice if you are under weight or are losing weight

Pressure injuries take a lot of nutrients to support healing. Losing weight or being underweight may mean that you do not have adequate amounts in your body's nutrient stores or are not taking in adequate amounts of essential nutrients. Without these essential nutrients, wound healing may be delayed.

If you think you may be under weight, are losing weight or struggling to eat adequate amounts ask your health care professional to signpost you to our other diet sheets: nourishing drinks, nourishing high calorie snacks and food fortification.

If you are struggling to maintain or gain weight after following this advice speak with your health care professional about a referral to a dietitian for further support.

Advice if you are overweight.

If you are overweight, it is important to try to maintain your weight through eating a healthy balanced diet whilst your pressure injury is healing. This is to make sure you are taking in enough of the nutrients needed. Once your pressure injury has healed, gradual weight loss may be beneficial to help protect your newly healed pressure injury and prevent new ones. Speak with your health care professional about weight loss if you require support once your pressure injury is healed.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk>

