

Good food for wound healing

Eating well and drinking plenty can help your wound to heal more quickly. You need a range of nutrients such as protein, vitamin C, and zinc to help your wound heal.

Protein is the most important nutrient. Protein helps:

- build new skin and tissue
- keep new skin healthy and your muscles strong.

Good sources of protein

Protein-rich foods include:

- meat and chicken
- fish
- eggs
- milk and milk products such as cheese and yoghurt
- cooked dried beans, split peas and lentils
- nuts and seeds.



Recommended amounts of protein foods

Milk and milk products

Have three servings a day.

One serving is:

- 1 cup (250 ml) of milk
- 1 pottle (150 g) of yoghurt
- 2 slices (40 g) of cheese.

If you're a healthy weight or overweight, have low-fat milk (green or yellow top), low-fat yoghurt and cheeses such as cottage cheese, Edam and noble.

If you need to gain weight, have whole milk (dark blue top), Greek yoghurt and cheeses like cheddar and colby.

Lean meats, chicken, seafood, eggs, legumes, nuts and seeds

Have two to three daily servings of:

- meat
- chicken
- fish
- eggs
- cooked dried beans, split peas, and lentils
- nuts and seeds.

One serving is:

- a piece of meat, chicken or fish the size and thickness of the palm of your hand
- one to two eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of tofu, cooked dried beans, split peas or lentils
- a small handful (30 g) of nuts or seeds.



Tips to eat more protein

- Eat protein-rich foods at every meal and snack.
- Make your own protein-enriched milk by adding four tablespoons of dried skim milk powder to two cups of milk. Use this milk as normal.
- If you have porridge, make it with milk or protein-enriched milk instead of water.
- Have milk or milky drinks such as fruit smoothies, or coffee or Milo made with milk.
- Sprinkle grated cheese on soups, cooked vegetables, baked beans, and egg dishes.
- Add seeds or chopped nuts to breakfast cereals, salads, and stir-fries.

Other ways to help your wound heal

Eat three meals a day – breakfast, lunch and dinner, with a small snack in-between. Don't skip meals.

Eat at least three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit every day. A serving is the size of the palm of your hand. Choose a variety of different coloured vegetables and fruit. This provides a range of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants to keep you healthy and help your wound heal.

Choose at least six servings of grain foods every day.

One serving is:

- 1 slice of bread
 - half to 1 cup of breakfast cereal
 - 1 cup of cooked pasta or rice.
- Wholemeal or wholegrain varieties are best.

Drinking

Drink at least 8 cups of fluid every day. You may need more if your wound is losing a lot of fluid. Where possible, have milk or milky drinks such as fruit smoothies, or coffee or Milo made with milk. You can also have low-sugar drinks, tea, coffee and water. If you're underweight, you may need an oral nutrition supplement drink such as Complan. Talk to your doctor about this.

Drinking too much alcohol can affect your healing. Read the information on *Alcohol and safe drinking* on www.healthinfo.org.nz.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

Some people believe that taking vitamin or mineral supplements helps with wound healing. But if you're eating well and having the foods recommended above, there's no proof that taking supplements helps.

If you aren't eating well and are avoiding a food group such as vegetables and fruit, you may need a supplement. Talk to your doctor about this.

Important

Talk to your doctor if you:

- find it difficult to eat well and your wound isn't healing
- are underweight or losing weight without trying to
- have diabetes and you're finding it difficult to keep your blood sugar in the normal range.

Your doctor may refer you to a dietitian for more advice.

Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Endorsed by Community Dietitian Nurse Maude Association. Last reviewed June 2019.