

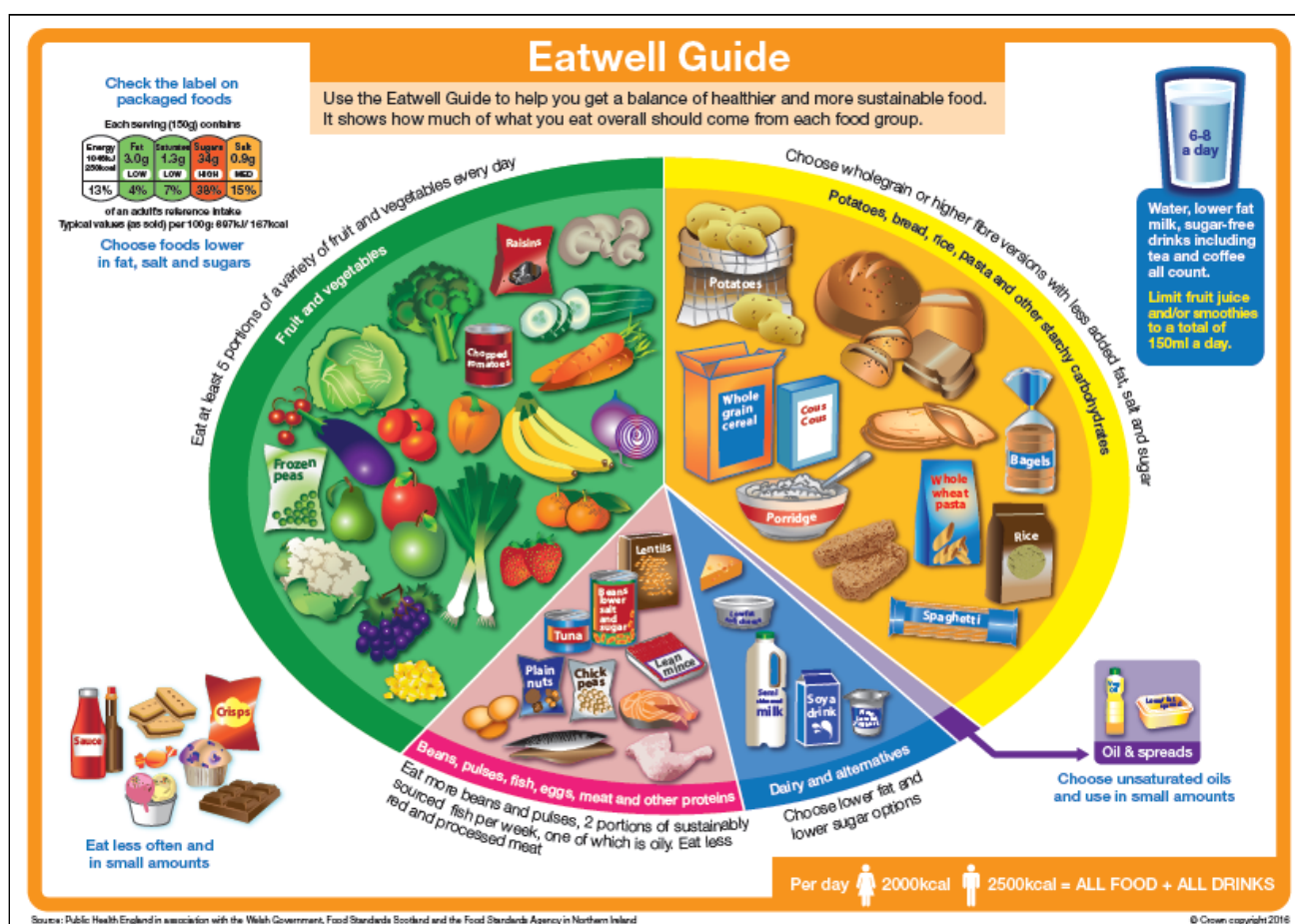
What should I eat to help my pressure ulcer or wound heal?

Nutrition and Dietetic Service/
Tissue Viability Service
Information for Patients

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Introduction

If you have a pressure ulcer or a large wound it is important that you think about what you are eating. There are many nutrients involved in healing, and if you are not eating the foods that give them, your wound or pressure ulcer may take longer to heal. The picture below shows the types and proportions of food needed to provide a balanced diet.



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Eating the right type of food


It is very important that you eat a balanced diet, to provide all the nutrients necessary for healing.

- Foods from the 'beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins' section are a good source of **protein** which is needed for repair. Your body will need more protein at this time, so make sure you have foods from this group every day.
- Foods from the 'potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates' section provide **energy**. Your body will need extra energy to help the healing process. You should include food from this section with each meal.
- Try to include at least 5 portions from the 'fruit and vegetables' section each day. Many of the **vitamins and minerals** in these foods are important to the healing process (examples of a portion include: an apple; a banana; 2 to 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables; 1 glass of fruit juice).
- You should also have food from the 'dairy and alternatives' section each day. These foods can be a useful **nutritious snacks** when your appetite is poor and contain good amounts of protein. When your appetite is poor swap low fat varieties for full fat varieties. Foods in this group include milk, cheese, yoghurt and fromage frais.
- Food from the 'oil and spreads' section are normally only needed in small amounts. These foods contain a lot of calories. You can use a little more when your appetite is poor as they can help provide extra energy.
- The 'eat less often' section to the side of the circle contains the foods which should only be eaten in small amounts. However if your appetite is poor these foods can provide some useful energy; they should be included along with foods from each of the food groups in the circle to help meet your needs. Once your wound has healed and/ or your appetite returns to normal, reduce your intake of these foods in line with healthy eating advice (foods in this group include chocolate, crisps, biscuits, cakes, puddings, soft drinks).
- It is important to make sure you are drinking enough **fluid**. Try to have at least 6 to 8 cups a day. If there is a lot of fluid loss from your wound you will need more than this. Drinks such as full cream milk, hot chocolate, malted milk drinks, and sweet or savoury 'nutritious drinks' such as Complan or Meritene Energis, can help provide additional nutrients.

Eating enough to support your recovery

It is important that you provide your body with enough protein, energy, vitamins and minerals to meet the needs of repair and recovery. This can be difficult when you have a poor appetite. The points below may help:

- Make sure you eat something at each mealtime: breakfast, lunch and evening meal; even if it is only something small. Do not miss meals.
- You may also need snacks between meals. A choice of snacks should be available with drinks mid-morning, mid-afternoon and at supper-time whilst you are in hospital. These will provide extra nutrition.

- Try to eat “little and often”, making the most of your best times of day.
- High protein, high calorie meals make the best choice at this time. While you are in hospital choose dishes marked with this symbol for higher calories. 
- Do not fill up on low calorie, low fat or diet foods whilst your appetite is poor. Choose full fat or foods with more nutrients during this time.
- If your appetite is not as good as usual, try to include nutritious drinks. Try a glass of full cream milk, or you may also be offered a Complan drink while in hospital.
- Friends or family may be able to bring in food you like from home. **It is important to talk to the ward staff first, to make sure the foods are suitable, transported and stored correctly, and ward guidelines are followed.**
- If you are not eating enough foods to provide key vitamins and minerals you may be told to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement. This will help to make sure you are getting nutrients such as vitamin C and zinc that are important for healing of wounds.
- Vitamin C helps directly with the healing process, and with the absorption of iron from your food. Vitamin C is found in a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, drinking a small glass of fruit juice (150ml) with your meal can be a good way to improve your intake.
- Zinc is also important to help new skin tissue to form and to help healing. Good sources are lean red meat, shell fish, milk, cheese, bread, lentils, beans and cereal products such as wheatgerm.
- Iron is important for the healing process. Foods that are good sources of iron include meat, fish and eggs. Iron is also found in other food such as beans, pulses, green vegetables and dried fruit, but these are less easily absorbed
- If you are still have a poor appetite when you go home, everyday foods (such as full fat milk and cheese) can be added to increase the calories and protein in your meals.

You can get advice on the food you need from your ward dietitian or view the link below:

<http://www.lnds.nhs.uk/Library/EatWellWithaSmallAppetiteLND008.pdf>

It may also be necessary for you to have some prescribed oral nutritional supplements (sip feeds). These give a rich source of energy, protein and other nutrients. A dietitian may be available to talk to you about the best one and how many you will need.

Diabetes

If you have diabetes then good blood sugar control is important for healing. Make sure you are eating at regular intervals and check your blood sugar levels. Your diabetes medication may need adjusting by your diabetes team. If you are not sure which are the best food choices for you, your ward dietitian can help you.

You should see your ward dietitian if you:

- need further information on the foods you should eat.
- need help applying this information to your diet.
- are finding it difficult to follow the advice given here.
- have several different dietary requirements to consider.
- are not sure how the advice given in this leaflet will work with previous advice from a health care professional.
- need advice on your diet before you go home.

You can ask for a referral to be sent by the nursing team on your ward.

Contact details

Nutrition and Dietetic Department: 0116 258 5400

Tissue Viability Team - Leicester General Hospital: 0116 258 4669

Tissue Viability Team - Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 6848

If you have any questions, write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your nurse/ consultant:

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