

# Eat your way to good health and wound healing

Nutrition plays an important role in our general health and wellbeing, but it is also essential for wound healing. Protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals are all needed to repair skin and tissue. Read on to find how to eat for good health.

## 1. Fibre

Eating more fibre has many benefits for health generally. Fibre keeps your digestive system healthy and prevents constipation. It has also been shown to lower your cholesterol and blood sugars, reduce your risk of heart disease and lower your risk of some cancers, e.g. bowel cancer<sup>1</sup>.

**Top tip:** Choose higher fibre or wholegrain foods such as, wholewheat pasta, brown rice, wholemeal bread and plenty of vegetables, fruit and pulses (e.g. beans, lentils or chickpeas).

## 2. Vegetables and fruit

Fruit and vegetables not only add fibre to the diet, they are also low in sugar

and fat, and a good source of vitamins and minerals<sup>2</sup>. Vitamins and minerals are important in every aspect of wound healing, including fighting infection, and growth of new tissue and collagen, a crucial protein for wound repair.

**Top tip:** Fruit and vegetables can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced. A portion of dried fruit should be smaller than fresh fruit and limit fresh juice as it can be sugary.

## 3. Protein

Protein is essential for growth, repair and maintenance of bones, muscles, skin and hair. Protein foods are also more filling and can stop you snacking in between meals. If you have a wound, protein is especially



important as inadequate protein has been shown to significantly delay wound healing<sup>3</sup>. Wounds producing a high volume of wound fluid need extra protein, as protein is lost in the exudate<sup>3</sup>.

**Top tip:** Good food sources of protein are meat, fish, dairy products, eggs, nuts and soya, beans, peas and lentils.

#### 4. Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates provide energy and nutrients for the body, along with protein and fat. Not all carbohydrates are the same. Simple carbohydrates, also known as free sugars, are low in fibre, vitamins and minerals but high in calories. They are important if you have a wound to provide energy for healing, but in general, should be eaten in small quantities to prevent weight gain. Complex carbohydrates, also known as starches, provide a steady source of energy, and are higher in fibre, vitamins and minerals and lower in calories.

**Top tip** Free sugars contribute to dental cavities, obesity and diseases such as diabetes and heart disease and it is advisable to limit how much we eat.

#### 5. Cut down on saturated fats

We need some fat in our diet as it is a source of energy and helps us absorb certain vitamins (e.g. A, D and E)<sup>3</sup>. However, eating too much of the wrong kind of fat can lead to weight gain, raised cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease. Food can contain a mix of different fats, such as saturated, unsaturated and trans-fat<sup>3</sup>. Any fat not used by the body's cells or turned into energy is converted into body fat (as do unused carbohydrates and proteins). If you have a wound, some fat is a useful source of calories and provides energy to the wound healing cells.

**Top tip:** Try to eat less saturated fat and choose foods that contain unsaturated fats instead, such as vegetable oils and spreads, oily fish and avocados.

There are a few other things to remember to complete a healthy diet:

- Eat less salt as it raises your blood pressure which makes you more likely to develop heart disease
- Drink plenty of fluids to stop you getting dehydrated. Healthy choices include water, low fat milk, tea and coffee.

