



Healing From the Inside Out: Nutrition Basics

FACT

The skin is the largest organ in the body. It's about 10% of your body weight! Proper nutrition helps keep your skin healthy and allows it to complete the job of rebuilding tissue caused by a wound or other injury.

FUELING YOUR BODY

Your body needs the right amount of calories and protein every day in order to heal a wound.



Think of calories as fuel for your body, just like gasoline is fuel for your car. Without enough fuel, your body—and your car—can't run properly.

EAT TO HEAL

If you are not eating well or have a poor appetite, try eating five or six small meals each day, instead of three big meals. Smaller meals and snacks help you get the nutrition you need to heal.



THE HEALING POWER OF PROTEIN

PROTEIN SOURCES

- Eggs
- Fish
- Chicken
- Dairy
- Beef

What if I don't eat meat?

Other sources of protein:

- Legumes
- Nuts, seeds, and nut butters
- Soy foods

TO HEAL, AIM FOR 20 TO 30 GRAMS OF PROTEIN AT EACH MEAL

20 to 25 grams of protein:

- A piece of cooked chicken, lean meat, or fish the size of a deck of cards (about 3 ounces)



8 grams of protein:

- 1 cup of low-fat milk
- 1 cup of yogurt

6 to 7 grams of protein:

- One egg
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter
- 1 ounce of cheese

VITAMINS: GOOD INSURANCE

Take a complete daily multivitamin

Include vitamin C, an important antioxidant:

- Increases the strength of the wound as it heals
- Helps with the creation of collagen in the skin
- Is important in the creation of new blood vessels
- Helps with iron absorption
- Citrus fruits and leafy green vegetables are great sources of vitamin C



Try a Ready-to-Drink Nutrition Shake

- Can help if you are not eating enough food
- Are available at grocery stores, drug stores, and discount chains
- Come in many flavors, so choose your favorites

STAY HYDRATED

Anything that is liquid at room temperature helps keep you hydrated, including:

- Soup
- Fruit ices
- Ice cream
- Gelatin

Take a few sips of liquid at every commercial break while watching television or every few pages while reading.

Based on information from:

Baranoski S, Ayello EA. *Wound Care Essentials: Practice Principles*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2012.

Dietetics in Health Care Communities Dietetic Practice Group. In: Niedert KC, ed in chief, Carlson MP, ed. *Nutrition Care of the Older Adult: A Handbook for Nutrition Throughout the Continuum of Care*. 3rd ed. Chicago, IL: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; 2016.