

Wound Healing and Nutrition

Nutrition has an important role in preventing and healing wounds such as pressure injuries. Often residents who develop pressure injuries or have chronic, slow healing wounds are malnourished. This can be the case even if an individual is overweight or obese.

There are many nutrients involved in the process of wound healing and maintenance of skin integrity. Good nutrition is needed to provide these nutrients.

Older adults who are malnourished or have chronic illness such as obesity and diabetes have a higher risk of developing pressure injuries and may have slower wound healing. It is important that we check their nutritional status and offer them a good well-balanced diet to help with wound healing.

Assessing Nutritional Status

A nutrition assessment is completed by the registered nurse in aged residential care (ARC). The registered nurse is the accountable practitioner who will assess the individual residents care needs following ARC policy, community health pathways and the frailty care guides. Care staff, please refer to this nutritional handout as a resource to inform and guide your care. Any changes need to be discussed with the registered nurse.

You can help assess your resident's nutritional status by completing a five-day food and fluid record with all food and fluid that has been consumed. The more detail of type of food eaten and quantities the more useful this information will be.

Optimising Diet

As there is not just one nutrient involved in wound healing it is important that your residents get variety in their diet by:

- Encouraging food from all four food groups
 - Dairy (3 serves per day)
 - Breads and Cereals (4-6 serves per day)
 - Fruit and vegetables (5+ serves per day)
 - Meat and meat alternative (2 serves per day)
- Encouraging increased fluids throughout the day, aiming for at least 1.5L per day. This might mean you have to offer fluids more frequently in the day.
- Fortifying food with additional calories and/or protein as per below table and encourage snacks (morning tea, afternoon tea and supper). It is important that there is some protein at each meal such as egg, fish, meat, chicken, dairy, nuts and seeds or beans and legumes.

Breakfast	Porridge/cereal with full cream milk + 1-2 tbsp of cream Scrambled egg with grated cheese Egg + bacon + baked beans
Lunch/Dinner	Mashed potato + grated cheese + margarine Sandwiches with protein fillings (cottage cheese, tuna, ham & cheese, hummus) Vegetables + cheese sauce Soup + cream + grated cheese
Dessert	Add ice cream, cream, custard
Snacks	Cheese and crackers, cheese sandwiches, custards and puddings, full fat yoghurt, nuts/seeds (ground if required), muffins with butter and jam, scones with cream, scrambled eggs, baked beans on toast, creamy soups
Drinks	Use full cream milk in all hot drinks Offer milk/milkshakes/smoothies/milky milo/milky coffee

Nourishing Drinks

Nourishing drinks can be a helpful way to add calories and protein particularly if your resident has a poor appetite and struggles to eat larger quantities. These drinks are to be used on top of what your resident is eating, not as a meal replacement.

Offering milkshakes, smoothies, milky drinks such as milky tea, coffee or milo between meals can be helpful. If appropriate juice and soft drinks such as lemonade and gingerale may also be used.

Powder drinks such as Complan or Vitaplan can be purchased from the supermarket and come in a variety of flavours.

Nutritional Supplements

Nutritional supplements might be prescribed if the diet cannot be optimised, or no improvement is seen with the above advice.

Powdered supplements such as Ensure Powder and Sustagen are available and are fully subsidised or liquid supplements such as Ensure Plus and Fortisip are available with a part-charge. Protein powders such as Beneprotein and Protifar may also be used. These supplements are prescribed by the Dietitian or GP to provide extra energy, protein and micronutrients.

When mixing up powdered supplements, make sure that you use the prescribed amount of powder stated.

To make supplements more interesting you can:

- Provide flavours and temperature drinks that are enjoyed by individual residents and vary these every day i.e. coffee powder, chocolate powder, milkshake flavourings
- Make them into smoothies by blending them with ½ a cup of frozen fruit or berries with 2 tablespoons of yoghurt
- Make them into milkshakes by blending them with adding 2 tablespoons of ice cream and milkshake flavouring
- Serve them warm by heating them up to (not to boiling) and mixing in coffee or milo powder
- Serve them chilled with ice
- Mix them directly into ice cream or milky puddings
- Neutral or vanilla flavoured powders can be added to porridge or puddings
- Powdered supplements can also be used in baking

Please make sure that all fluids are served in the appropriate receptacle i.e. spouted beaker, with or without a straw. Remember to thicken fluids to appropriate thickness if required.

Arginine Enriched Supplements

Occasionally arginine enriched supplements are prescribed like Arginaid, Enprocal Repair, Cubitan. These supplements are wound healing specific with arginine present, an amino acid found to be involved in the healing process. They are not funded and are purchased by residents, it is important that we support the residents to drink what is recommended.

The taste of these supplements can be improved like the other supplements above.

For further information on diet and wound healing contact your facility Dietitian.