

Nutrition and Healing

Good nutrition is an essential component of the healing process. It's important to provide enough calories, protein and fluids while you heal. Eating a balanced diet provides the variety of vitamins and minerals your body needs for healing.

Poor nutrition can interfere with healing, especially if combined with other risk factors.

Risk Factors

You're more likely to have problems with healing if you have poor nutrition along with the following risk factors:

- Restricted activity (for example, if you're bedridden or wheelchair bound, or if you have paralysis)
- Communication difficulties
- Damp skin, such as with incontinence
- Poor circulation
- Low weight and/or malnutrition

Calories

Calories are important for proper nutrition. You need more calories if you have:

- A wound (such as a pressure ulcer or surgical incision)
- Infection
- Stress

To be sure you get enough calories, you must eat at least three meals per day with planned snacks.

Vitamins and Minerals

If you don't get enough of the right vitamins and minerals, you'll slow down the healing process. Your health care provider might recommend a multivitamin or mineral supplement to ensure adequate nutrition. Important vitamins and minerals used in the healing process are:

- Vitamin C
- Zinc
- Iron
- Vitamin A

Protein

Eating a good amount of protein promotes wound healing. It also makes you less likely to get an infection. Not eating enough protein greatly slows down the wound healing process. Good sources of protein include:

- Milk
- Meat, fish and poultry
- Greek yogurt
- Beans
- Peanut butter
- Eggs
- Custard
- Cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Nuts
- Tips to help increase protein

Tips to help increase protein in your diet:

- Drink high-calorie and protein-rich drinks such as Carnation Instant Breakfast mixed with whole milk, Ensure or Boost.
- Use milk, half-and-half, or cream to make soups.
- Mix one tablespoon of dry milk powder into one cup of milk, then add it to recipes containing milk, such as:
 - ☐ Hot chocolate
 - ☐ Hot cereals
 - ☐ Soups
 - ☐ Scrambled eggs
 - ☐ Casseroles
 - ☐ Hamburgers or other ground meat patties
 - ☐ Meats such as creamed tuna, chicken or beef
 - ☐ Mashed, au gratin or scalloped potatoes
- Add four to six tablespoons of dry milk powder to recipes for:
 - ☐ Breads, rolls, muffins and cornbread

- ☐ Pancakes and waffles
- ☐ Cake, cookies and cream pie
- ☐ Custards and puddings
- ☐ Gravy and cream sauce
- ☐ Meatloaf
- Eat more cheese:
 - ☐ Use on toast, crackers or meat sandwiches.
 - ☐ Make a cheeseburger.
 - ☐ Grate it onto vegetables, potatoes, pasta and salads and into cream sauces, omelets, casseroles, soups and stews.
- Use yogurt as a snack or a fruit dip.
- Add nuts to:
 - ☐ Casseroles
 - ☐ Vegetables
 - ☐ Salads
 - ☐ Desserts
- Put peanut butter on:
 - ☐ Toast and crackers
 - ☐ Celery sticks
 - ☐ Fresh fruit such as apples or bananas
- Eat more eggs:
 - ☐ Use in salads.
 - ☐ Use to make French toast.
 - ☐ Add extra egg whites to scrambled eggs, meatloaf or other cooked foods where eggs are used.
 - ☐ Choose desserts that contain eggs, such as custard and bread or rice pudding.
- Include more meat in meals and snacks:
 - ☐ Add extra chopped meat (such as ham, turkey, roast beef and chicken) to soups, stews, casseroles and salads.
 - ☐ Have sliced deli meat for a snack, alone or with bread or crackers.
 - ☐ Add diced ham or bacon to scrambled eggs or omelets.

- Add white beans or kidney beans to soups or casseroles.
- Keep ready-to-eat snacks handy, such as trail mix with nuts, beef sticks, and string cheese.

Fluids

Fluids keep your skin healthy and promote good blood flow to wounded areas. Drink more fluids if you have a fever or if wounds are draining.

Questions?

Please contact your Gillette health care provider.

[Make An Appointment 651-290-8707](#) [Refer a Patient 651-325-2200](#)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](#).