

Rehabilitation, Aged and Community Care

NUTRITION AND WOUND HEALING FOR ADULTS

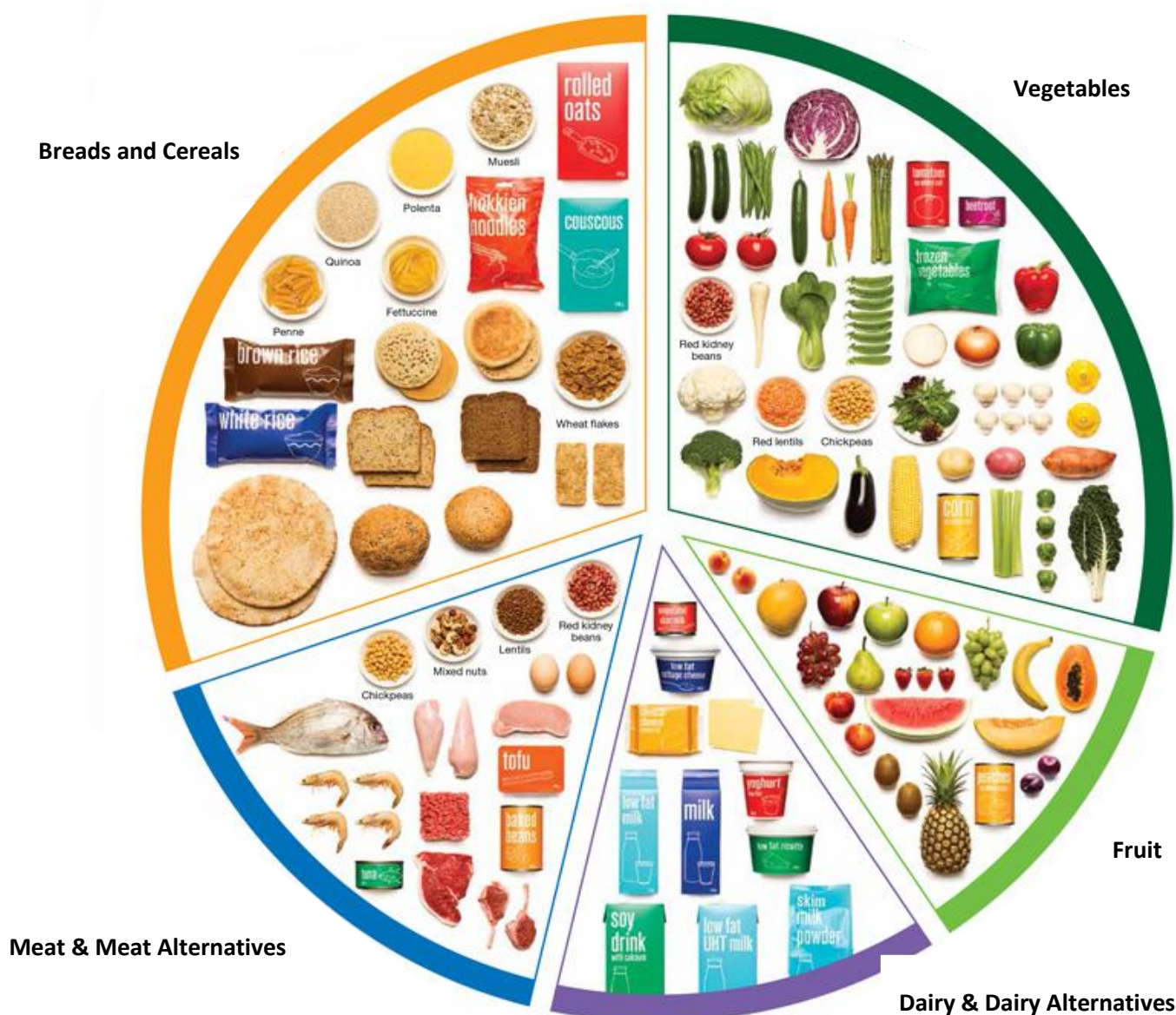
Did You Know?

Eating a well-balanced healthy diet is important for wound healing as well as strengthening your immune system. Without good nutrition, it may take longer for your wounds to heal.

What is a Healthy Diet?

Healthy eating means choosing a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups to ensure your body is getting all the nutrients it needs to heal. People who don't eat enough foods from a particular food group can increase their risk of nutritional deficiencies¹ and wound healing complications². It is also important to limit unhealthy foods that are lacking nutrients.

What are the food groups and how much of each should I eat each day?



Type of food	Serves Per day	Serving size (Please note: that these are recommendations for adults aged 18 years and over)
Breads and Cereals	3-6	1 slice of bread or, ½ medium roll or, ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles, porridge or, ⅔ cup wheat cereal flakes or, ¼ cup of muesli or, 3 crisp breads or, 1 crumpet/ small English muffin
Vegetables	5-6	½ cup cooked vegetables or, ½ cup cooked, dried or canned beans, peas, lentils or, 1 cup of green leafy or raw salad vegetables or, ½ medium potato or other starchy vegetables or, 1 medium tomato
Fruit	2	1 medium apple, banana, orange or pear or, 2 small apricots, kiwi fruits or plums or, 1 cup diced or canned fruit or, ½ cup fruit juice or, 30g dried fruit
Meat and Meat Alternatives	2-3	65g cooked lean meats such as beef, lamb, veal or pork or, 80g cooked lean poultry or, 100g cooked fish or, 2 large eggs or, 1 cup of cooked/ canned legumes or, 170g tofu or, 30g nuts, seeds, peanut butter
Dairy and Dairy Alternatives	2 ½- 4	1 cup milk/milk alternatives or, ½ cup evaporated milk or, 2 slices cheese or, ½ cup ricotta cheese or, ¾ cup yoghurt

How can good nutrition help my wound heal?

The following areas of a well-balanced healthy diet can be important to assist in wound healing:

Energy (kilojoules, calories)

Adequate energy is necessary to stop muscle loss, protein deficiency and unintentional weight loss. Energy is found in all foods. Some foods such as margarines, oils, cream, sugar, jams and juices are particularly high in energy but offer little nutritional value.

Protein

Protein helps your skin grow and your wounds to heal. It prevents further skin tearing and prevents and fights infection. Protein is found in foods such as meat, chicken, fish, milk, cheese, yoghurt, eggs, legumes and nuts.

Zinc

Zinc helps the body to use protein. Zinc deficiency slows down skin growth and decreases wound healing. Sources of zinc include meat, poultry, milk and milk products, wholegrain cereals and nuts.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C encourages skin growth. Eating enough foods that contain vitamin C can help speed up wound healing. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes and also in fresh vegetables.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A helps skin growth and skin strength. Good sources include liver, carrots, spinach and squash.

B-Complex vitamins

These prevent infection and help the body to use protein. Best sources of Vitamin B are breads, cereals, pasta and yeast extracts such as Vegemite™, Promite™ and Bonox™.

What about Water?

For good health, adults need to be drinking plenty of water every day. People with wounds can lose more water from their body, particularly if the wound is weeping and the dressings are wet. Also, adequate fluid levels assist in preventing constipation (in conjunction with your healthy diet) and also help the kidneys to flush toxins out of the blood.

Aim for 6-8 glasses/mugs of fluid a day. This should exclude beverages containing caffeine and alcohol.

Nutritional Supplement Drinks

Sometimes it can be difficult to eat enough food to ensure a healthy diet, particularly if you don't feel well, have a poor appetite or your wound is taking longer than expected to heal. If this happens, nourishing drinks (such as nutritional supplements) are a great way to prevent poor nutrition. These drinks are great for between meals to 'top-up' your nutrition, as they are not as filling as foods. *Your dietitian will be able to tell you if you need nutritional supplements.*

A Word on Weight

Too much weight loss or weight gain can make it more difficult for your wound to heal.

Your dietitian is the best person to guide you towards a healthy weight.



How does all of that food fit together?

Take a look at the sample meal plan for one day below and use it as a guide.

Meal	Nourishing meal ideas:
Breakfast:	Cereal with milk e.g. 2 Weet-bix with milk or ½ cup cooked porridge made with milk or, 2 slices multigrain toast with a high protein topping for example peanut butter, slice of cheese, eggs or baked beans AND 1 glass of juice
Morning Tea:	Choose one or two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dried fruit and nuts• Yoghurt, custard or ice cream• Piece of fruit• Crackers with cheese and tomato• Glass milk or hot cocoa• Fruit smoothie
Lunch:	Sandwich with salad and high protein filling such as meat, chicken, canned fish, peanut butter, eggs, hummus or, Jacket potato with fillings such as mince, tuna, cheese, baked beans, avocado and sour cream AND Yoghurt
Afternoon Tea:	See morning tea ideas
Dinner:	Meat/chicken/fish/eggs/legumes with pasta or rice or potato and vegetables AND Fruit and custard
Supper:	See morning tea idea

Remember: Drinking a glass of water with meals or between meals can help you meet your fluid needs.

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References:

1. National Health and Medical Research Council. *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*. Canberra: NHMRC; 2013 Jan 13 Available from: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/n55i_australian_guide_to_healthy_eating.pdf
2. Wounds Australia - <http://www.woundsaustralia.com.au>

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