

Nutrition and Pressure Damage

This leaflet explains more about the importance of eating and drinking well if you have or are at risk of developing pressure damage. If you have any more questions, please speak to a member of the team looking after you, either at home or in the hospital, such as a nurse, dietitian, your doctor or GP.

What is pressure damage and why have I got it?

Pressure damage, sometimes called pressure ulcers, pressure sores or bedsores, can happen when there is pressure for a long time on an area of your skin. This pressure can cause the skin to break down and the tissue underneath may become damaged. Pressure damage can range from being patches of discoloured skin to deep wounds.

How can nutrition help?

If you have or are at risk of developing pressure damage or have open wounds, it is important to make sure you are eating and drinking well as you may require more nutrition than normal to help your skin to heal and to prevent pressure damage from developing.

Calories – Developing pressure damage may be more likely if you are underweight as damage commonly occurs on bony areas of the body where there may not be enough fat stores to 'cushion' the area. It is important you consume enough energy or calories to help the damage to heal and to prevent future pressure damage by building up fat stores if needed. Some high calorie foods include cakes, biscuits and full fat foods such as yoghurts, custards and milk.

Protein – Protein plays a big role in helping to make new skin and muscle cells. Increasing your protein intake may even help your pressure damage to heal quicker. Protein is found in foods such as meats, fish, beans, pulses, dairy products, tofu and high-protein meat alternatives.

Fluid – Hydration is essential to keeping your skin healthy as fluids help to carry nutrients around your body. Being dehydrated is a key risk factor for developing pressure damage. You should aim to have between 6-8 cups of fluid (1500ml-2000ml) per day. This can include water, juices, squash, milk, tea, coffee, soups, ice-cream and jelly. Nourishing drinks such as those made with milk are also good choices as they provide energy and protein as well.

An easy way to see if you are hydrated is look at your urine – it should be a pale straw colour.

What about vitamins and minerals?

Vitamins and minerals are an important part of our diet, however there is no evidence at the moment that specific vitamins or minerals will help pressure damage to heal quicker. You can get all of the vitamins and minerals you require from a healthy, balanced diet. If you are concerned that your diet is lacking in specific vitamins or minerals, speak with your doctor or dietitian and they may recommend a multivitamin.

What if I have a poor appetite?

If you are finding it difficult to eat or drink enough or have a poor appetite, the following tips may help to increase your protein and energy intake.

- Eat little and often – try small meals or snacks every few hours.
- Try having some high energy and high protein snacks such as:
 - hot buttered toast or crumpets
 - cakes, pastries or slices of fruit loaf with butter
 - samosas, bhajis, pork pies, sausage rolls
 - Jacket potatoes with butter, cheese, tuna or beans
 - Rice pudding, tinned fruit in syrup, full fat yoghurts and mousses
 - Bowls of cereal with enriched or full fat milk
 - Sandwiches with one or more fillings such as ham, beef, tuna mayonnaise, cheese, peanut butter, hummus or egg mayonnaise.
- Try a nourishing drink between meals:
 - Fortified milk: Add 2-3 tablespoons of dried milk powder to a pint of milk.
 - Banana milkshakes: Made by blending together vanilla supplements or full fat milk with half a ripe banana, a scoop of vanilla ice-cream and a tablespoon of milk powder.
 - Fruit yoghurt smoothies: Small tin of fruit in syrup, a small plain yoghurt or a scoop of ice-cream and a tablespoon of milk powder. Mix with full fat milk as needed.
- Make the most of the times when you feel hungry and eat as much as possible.
- Consider having a drink after your meal to avoid filling yourself up with fluid and eating less food. Choose full fat or full sugar versions of foods and drinks instead of light, diet or low fat choices.

Nutritional Supplements

These are drinks that are prescribed for people who are finding it difficult to eat or drink enough. If you haven't been offered these and are concerned that you are not eating well or are losing weight, talk to your healthcare team or dietitian. They may be able to arrange for you to have these on prescription.

Food fortification can help to increase the calorie and protein content of your food.

You could try:

- Using whole or full fat products such as milk or yoghurts.
- Adding fruit, nuts, sugar or honey to cereals or porridge.
- Adding oil, cheese, cream or butter/margarine to vegetables, sauces, soups, and mashed potatoes.
- Adding extra sauces and gravy to meat, chicken and fish – such as white sauce, cheese sauces or parsley sauce.
- Adding extra fillings or using full fat mayonnaise, salad cream or dressings in sandwiches
- Having a pudding with meals such as yoghurts, sponge cakes or rice puddings.
- Adding extra cream, honey or condensed milk to puddings.
- Making fortified milk by adding 2-3 tablespoons of dried milk powder to a pint of milk and then using as normal.

What if I have diabetes?

Conditions which can affect how the blood flows through the body, such as type 2 diabetes, can also increase your risk of developing pressure damage or increase the time it takes for a pressure damage to heal.

As well as good nutrition, well-controlled blood glucose levels can help wound healing and help prevent pressure damage from developing. However, if you are at risk of malnutrition and are trying to help pressure damage to heal, your blood sugar levels should be managed by medication and there is no need to restrict your diet. Speak to your healthcare team or Dietitian for more advice.

Useful sources of information

If you are concerned about your weight, NHS Choices has an online tool for calculating your body mass index (BMI), available at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/loseweight/Pages/BodyMassIndex.aspx>

The British Dietetic Association (BDA) has food fact sheets on various subjects, including malnutrition, and eating well for less: <https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your nutrition and feel it would help to see the dietitian please speak to your nurse or doctor who can refer you.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

