Good nutrition plays a key role in helping wounds and incisions to heal. Nutrients and oxygen must reach the tissues of the wound in order for healing to occur. Key nutrients for wound healing include protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamin C, vitamin A, iron, and fluids. Eat a wide variety of foods. Include 3 meals with 2 to 3 snacks daily for balanced nutrition.

**Protein**

When you have a wound, you need more protein than normal for healing. Protein foods also provide zinc and iron. Good sources of protein include meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, peanut butter, dry beans, and nuts.

**To help with wound healing:**

Eat at least 2 to 3 portions of protein each day. Include foods high in protein with every meal and snack.

Aim for the following portions (each equal to about 14 grams protein):

- 2 to 3 ounces of cooked meat, poultry, or fish (size equal to a deck of cards)
- 2 eggs
- 2 to 3 ounces of cheese (4 dice or 2 thumbs = 1 ounce or 1 tablespoon)
- 4 tablespoons of peanut butter
- 2 ounces nuts (½ cup)

**Carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates provide quick fuel for energy. Extra fuel may be needed to meet the demands of wound healing and to preserve body proteins. Good sources of carbohydrates include bread, cereal, rice, pasta, fruits, and milk.

Eat 6 to 11 servings of starches each day. Choose whole grain varieties for added fiber and B vitamins.

A serving is:

- one slice of bread
- half of a small bagel
- 4 to 6 crackers
- ½ cup of cooked cereal, pasta or rice (equal to size of racquetball)
- ½ cup of cooked beans, potatoes, corn or peas

Eat 2 or 3 servings of milk, yogurt or cheese each day. These provide protein, calcium and vitamins A, B and D.

A serving is:

- 1 cup of milk, yogurt, pudding or custard (equal to 1 fist clenched)
- 1 ounce of cheese
Eat at least 5 fruit and vegetable servings each day as good sources of vitamins A and C.

A serving of fruit is:
- ½ cup cooked vegetable or 1 cup raw vegetable
- a small piece of fresh fruit (apple, orange, pear)
- ¼ cup of dried fruit
- ½ cup of canned fruit or fruit juice
- ¼ cup berries
- 1 cup melon
- ½ banana or grapefruit

Fats
Fats are another source of fuel for the body, as well as vitamins A, D, E, and K. Eat 3 to 4 servings each day.

A serving is:
- margarine – 1 teaspoon
- oil – 1 teaspoon
- mayonnaise – 1 teaspoon
- light mayonnaise – 1 Tablespoon
- cream cheese – 1 Tablespoon
- salad dressings – 1 Tablespoon
- avocado – 2 Tablespoons (1 ounce)
- olives – 8 large
- nuts – 1 ounce

Choose monounsaturated fats such as olive or canola oil and nuts or polyunsaturated fats such as salad dressings or light mayonnaise. Avoid saturated fats such as butter, bacon, or lard, as well as trans fats found in some baked goods, stick margarine, and other processed foods.

Fluid
Fluid needs are increased with wound healing. Drink 10 to 12 cups of caffeine-free fluid daily, unless your doctor has told you to limit your fluid intake. Fluids with caffeine or alcohol increase your body fluid needs and slow healing. People losing extra fluid due to fever, draining wounds, diarrhea, or vomiting may need more than 10-12 cups a day.

Good sources of fluid include water, 100% fruit juices, milk, soups, and liquid nutritional supplements. You may find it easier to drink beverages between meals.

Supplements
Vitamins, minerals, and nutritional supplements may help with wound healing if your appetite and intake are poor. Ask your doctor and dietitian if you should be taking a multivitamin. Talk with your doctor or dietitian before buying any supplement drinks, including those found in health food stores. They can help you decide which supplements are best for you.

Check with your dietitian, doctor, or nurse if you have questions about your diet.