

# Foods First: Nutrition, Pressure Ulcer Management and Skin Health

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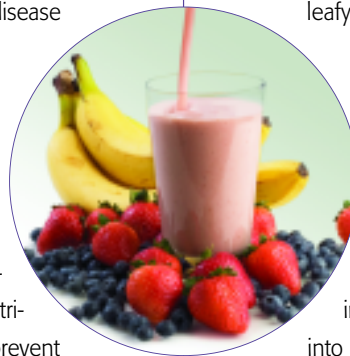
**T**he following nutrition resource may be reproduced by health-care professionals and provided to clients who are at risk for or present with pressure ulcers. It is important to note that nutrition education and intervention for pressure ulcer management must take into account the client's complete clinical presentation. The enhancement of certain nutrients and/or fluids may be contraindicated for patients with concurrent disease states such as renal impairment.

## Eating Right Helps Keep Skin Healthy

The foods you eat provide your body with energy (calories) and many nutrients, such as protein, vitamins and minerals. Some of these nutrients are especially important to help prevent or heal pressure ulcers and to keep skin healthy.

It is very important that you try to increase your intake of foods that provide you with **protein**. High-quality sources of protein include meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, pudding and ice cream made with milk. Protein is also found in lower amounts in nuts, legumes (such as brown beans, navy beans, kidney beans, soy beans, chick peas, split peas and lentils) and foods made with whole grains.

**Vitamins** and **minerals** such as vitamin C, vitamin A, iron and zinc are other nutrients found in foods that help our bodies to heal wounds and to maintain healthy skin. Here is a list of foods that are key sources of these important nutrients:



**Vitamin C:** citrus fruits and juices, strawberries, tomatoes, sweet peppers (especially red), broccoli, potatoes, cauliflower, cantaloupe and Brussels sprouts.

**Vitamin A:** milk, eggs, liver, cheese and fish. Beta-carotene is changed into vitamin A in the body. Choose fruits and vegetables such as carrots, sweet red peppers, pink grapefruit, broccoli, mangoes, peaches and leafy greens.

**Iron:** beef, pork, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, liver, kidney, legumes, nuts, dried fruit, leafy green vegetables, pasta, bread and cereals that have added iron. Cooking in iron pots adds iron to foods too! The iron found in animal products (such as meats) gets into your body more easily than iron found in plants (such as vegetables). If you eat an iron-containing food at the same time as another food or juice that has vitamin C in it (see vitamin C list, above), it will be easier for your body to absorb the iron from the foods you eat.

**Zinc:** meats (beef, chicken, turkey, pork), fish and seafood (especially oysters), liver, eggs, milk, legumes, whole-wheat products and wheat germ.

The foods listed above are the main sources of these vitamins and minerals, but there are many foods that contain these nutrients. When you eat a wide variety of foods every day, you are giving your body the **vitamins**,

**minerals, protein** and **energy** it needs to heal your skin and keep it healthy.

Many people may not consider **water** to be a nutrient, but it is! Water is very important for wound healing, and it contributes to health and well-being in many ways. Our bodies may not always tell us that we are thirsty, especially as we get older. Therefore, it is necessary to plan water and other drinks, such as milk, fruit and vegetable juices, into meals and snacks.

Caffeine-containing drinks such as coffee, tea and cola are okay to take in moderation, but should not be used as your body's main source of water. Caffeine may increase the amount of water your body loses through urine. Try to drink no more than four cups per day of liquids that contain caffeine.

Do not take the nutrients listed in this article in the form of vitamin or mineral pills without first discussing

it with your doctor and dietitian.

Talk to your doctor and dietitian before significantly increasing the amount of these nutrients in your diet. ☺

*Developed as a patient/client education tool by Chris Fraser, HBSc, RD, Parkwood Hospital site, St. Joseph's Health Care, London, Ontario. Not to be utilized by patients/clients with clinical conditions associated with contraindications to elevated levels of these nutrients.*

### Eat a balanced diet

If you choose three of the four food groups (grain products, vegetables and fruit, milk and alternatives, and meat and alternatives) at each meal, and one or two of the food groups as snacks, you are helping your body get the nutrients it needs to prevent or heal pressure ulcers and achieve better health!