

Nutrition for Healing

You must prepare your body for the healing process after surgery. Your body needs carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals and water to support the repair process.

How many calories should I be eating since I will be inactive?

Now is NOT the time for weight loss! When people are immobilized, they worry about gaining weight. However, you should NOT decrease your calorie intake because you will be inactive. In fact, your calorie needs are now greater than usual because your body requires energy from nutritious foods to fuel the healing process. You will need to consume about 16 calories per lb (using your current body weight), of which 0.7 g/lb should be protein. The nurse will provide you with your individual requirements. If your overall energy and protein needs are not met, body tissues such will begin to break down. This will compromise healing and may prolong your recovery. Failure to maintain adequate nutrition may result in delayed wound healing, poor outcomes, infection, poor scarring, tissue loss, and other wound related complications. You can greatly aid the healing process and ensure better outcomes by being adequately nourished.

How much water should I be drinking?

Normally, it is important to drink at least 8 cups of water or non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic beverages every day. Drinking enough fluid is essential for maintaining adequate hydration and allowing your body to heal. You may need more fluid depending on the type of medication you are taking or the extent of your surgery. Don't wait until you're thirsty. By then, you're already dehydrated! Have a water bottle handy and plan for plenty of refreshing beverages throughout the day to keep your body in fluid balance.

What types of food should I be eating?

Eat well-balanced meals and a wide variety of foods to obtain all the nutrients your body needs for tissue repair. You should be eating lean, healthy meats and fishes, vegetables, fruits, and healthy sources of complex carbohydrates. Cut out the junk food! You want the calories to be packed with nutritional value! Count and record your protein and calorie intake after every meal after surgery. If you cannot meet the recommended calorie or protein intake with meals alone, eat protein bars or drink protein shakes. Both are widely available at the pharmacy or grocery store. This is **CRITICAL** to the success of your surgery.

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General Recommendations

Avoid weight loss/crash dieting before and after surgery to ensure adequate nutrients and energy for recovery.

Eat well-balanced meals to lower the risk of infection.

If you lose your appetite after surgery, nutrient-rich drinks/shakes can help you get enough calories (e.g. Carnation Instant Breakfast, Ensure, Boost, Sustacal).

Make sure you have plenty of water, juice, milk, or other drinks available.

Prepare food ahead of time and place in the freezer to be reheated later.

Consider stocking up on healthy low preparation foods, such as fruit, pudding, yogurt, low-fat frozen dinners, canned or instant soups, instant cereals, shredded cheese, pull-top tuna or other canned foods.

Small milk cartons, juice boxes, or water bottles may be helpful.

Consider buying pre-cut food or individual servings of food.

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