

Five top tips to prevent pressure ulcers

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Malnutrition and dehydration are risk factors for the development of pressure ulcers so we asked some dietitians and nutrition specialist nurses for their five top tips for eating well and drinking well to keep skin well.

You can adapt these for use in your organisation as most effective.

1. Ensure you have a healthy balanced diet and adequate energy intake to prevent skin breakdown and improve healing rates

- Carbohydrates like bread, rice, pasta, potatoes and cereal should form the basis of the diet and be eaten at each meal.
- Make sure you are having enough protein. Try to include a source of protein, for example, meat, fish, beans, pulses, eggs, dairy, soy, at each meal.
- Eat foods rich in vitamins and minerals. Aim to have at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- For more information on a healthy balanced diet, see:
www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx

2. Stay hydrated to maintain skin health

- Aim to have 6-8 drinks (1.5 litres) per day – this could include water, tea, coffee, milk and/or juice.
- Include foods containing fluid as part of your daily intake; for example, soup, cereal with milk, cream, custard and fruit.
- If you lose fluid because of excessive sweating, excessive urination, fluid from a wound, diarrhoea or vomiting, you may need to increase your fluid intake.

3. If your appetite is poor, or you need food high in energy and protein because of your illness, weight loss or surgery

- Try to eat little and often (for example three meals and two snacks a day) to ensure you are getting enough calories.

- Try to include nutritious snacks and drinks, like cheese and biscuits, milky drinks, dairy-based puddings and fruit.
- Choose full-fat versions of dairy foods.
- For more information and advice, see:
www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/MalnutritionFactSheet.pdf

4. If you are overweight or obese

- Follow the healthy balanced diet advice above, making sure you watch your portion sizes:
 - choose low-fat dairy foods and remove visible fat from meat
 - avoid high sugar foods e.g. biscuits, cakes, chocolate, fizzy drinks, sweets
 - avoid crash diets.

5. If you are helping someone who is unable to eat independently

- Provide adapted cutlery or crockery to support their independence
- Provide assistance (prompting, encouragement or feeding) when needed.

If you have a long-term condition, like diabetes or renal disease, or you need texture-modified diets and fluids, please consult your dietitian, speech and language therapist or doctor before following these tips.

For more information

This work is part of our [Stop the Pressure programme](#) and relates specifically to the nutritional element of the SSKIN bundle.

To see the other case studies in this series, visit our [Improvement Hub](#).

For more information on our nutrition and hydration work, email nhsi.nutritionandhydration@nhs.net

0300 123 2257 enquiries@improvement.nhs.uk improvement.nhs.uk

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