



Healthy Eating

What is a healthy diet?

A healthy diet consists of:

- Fruit and vegetables – to provide vitamin C, antioxidants, fibre and other essential vitamins and minerals
- Bread and cereals – to provide energy, fibre and vitamins
- Plenty of fluids
- Some dairy foods - to provide calcium, protein and energy
- Some meat and protein foods – to provide protein, iron and zinc
- Very few fatty and sugary foods.

Why is healthy eating important?

Healthy eating helps to:

- Control weight
- Prevent constipation
- Helps to lower risk of urinary tract infection
- Lower risk of pressure areas and promote healing
- Lower the risk of heart disease and cancer.

A regular exercise plan combined with a healthy diet will be of even greater benefit in controlling weight, preventing constipation, urinary tract infections and pressure areas, and lowering the risk of heart disease.

How to gain weight?

Weight loss and lack of appetite often occurs in the first few months after SCI. To gain weight, try:

- Enriched milk – add 3 tablespoons of milk powder to 1 cup of milk
- Fruit smoothies – blend fruit such as banana into enriched milk
- Yogurt, ice cream or milk puddings between meals
- Nuts, dried fruits, biscuits and cheese
- Soups made with milk
- Cheese or cheese sauce with soups and vegetables
- Cream with breakfast cereal, drinks, mashed potato.

How to eat less fat?

- Cut the fat off meat
- Take the skin off chicken
- Choose low fat milk, low fat yogurt and low fat cheese
- Cook with less oil, butter and margarine
- Use only a thin scrape of butter or margarine on bread
- Use tomato based sauces, rather than cream sauces for pasta dishes
- Don't add extra butter or margarine to vegetables
- Use oil-free salad dressings
- Only have snacks like chips, chocolate and cake occasionally
- Only eat take-away meals occasionally.

How to prevent constipation?

- Eat plenty of fibre – fruit, vegetables, legumes such as baked beans or lentils, wholemeal or wholegrain bread and high fibre breakfast cereal
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water each day.

How to reduce the risk of urinary tract infections?

- Drink at least 8 glasses of water each day
TIP: This needs to be managed in conjunction with the prescribed fluid intake for your particular bladder management program
- Cranberry juice may be effective in preventing bacteria binding to the bladder walls.

Pressure area care

- If you have a pressure area, increased amounts of vitamin C and zinc may help with the healing.



What about alcohol?

- Alcohol is high in calories and provides no nutrients
- Too much alcohol, along with a poor diet, can lead to increased weight gain and the increase of risk of pressure areas
- Alcohol and caffeine can make you dehydrated. After every glass of either alcohol or caffeine drink a glass of water to replace fluids
- Alcohol should be consumed in moderation only.



Further information

- Contact ParaQuad NSW
Freecall: **1800 424 096** (*outside metropolitan Sydney*)
Clinical Services Intake/Information Officer**02 8741 5674**
- Your local doctor
- Your dietician
- A member of the Spinal Outreach Service (SOS)**02 9334 0400**