

LIFESTYLE ADDITIONS THAT IMPROVE WOUND HEALING

By: Michael Stone, MD, MS

SLEEP: Sleep quality improves the healing and restoration rates in people. Getting 7-8 hours of sleep while not letting light hit the back of your eyes between 11 PM and 4 AM allows for the maximum recovery of your body and its' metabolism. The middle of the night is when certain hormone levels are at their highest, stimulating growth and recovery.

EXERCISE: Movement improves blood flow, even if a person is wheelchair bound doing movement exercises while sitting (i.e.: exercises with your arms, stretching, low level weights, or moving the good leg improves the immobilized leg, healing with the chemicals that the good leg releases).

Remember there is no combination of pills or supplements that can do all the good things that movement does for you. 15 minutes, 2X a day is a good start.

STRESS REDUCTION: Decreasing stress and figuring out how to relax or calm oneself improves healing by decreasing inflammation. Many things help us do that, like singing, laughing, deep breathing, hot baths, or imagining your favorite place, to mention a few. Stress reduction techniques include prayer, meditation, quieting, low impact movement (think tai chi), stretching (yoga or your own program).

SUN: Getting a pinkish dose of sun helps your body make vitamin D. Adequate levels of vitamin D speeds healing. Spring and summer is a good time of year to be outside.

NUTRITION: Protein/Oils/Minerals/Fat Soluble Vitamins/Antioxidants/B Vitamins/Probiotics

PROTEIN: Adequate protein if you are over the age of 50 is at least 0.8 grams/pound. If you weigh 100 pounds, that is 80 grams of protein. It seems like a lot of protein; however you have to maintain adequate protein to heal. It can be mixed vegetable and animal protein, or complementary proteins (rice, beans, grains, nuts). Arginine, found in walnuts, helps blood flow improve to your fingers and toes. It also helps lower blood pressure.

OILS: It is important to have essential fats, to decrease inflammation. Think fish oil, nuts, or avocado, also a tablespoon of ground flax seed is the equivalent to swallowing 4-6 fish oil capsules.

MINERALS: You need to have enough magnesium, zinc, calcium, iodine, iron and a host of other minerals to heal. A multi-mineral supplement is good. The richest sources of minerals are often found in green vegetables and legumes. Summer especially, is a perfect time of year to include 6 servings of green vegetables a day. One to two servings at each meal and with your midmorning and mid afternoon snacks will help your body heal.

FAT SOLUBLE VITAMINS: Think vitamin A, D, E, and K. Do you want to heal? Make sure you have these! They are often found in vegetables, green leafy vegetables, cold water fish (salmon or cod for example) and whole wheat. Let's talk vitamin D. At least 2,000IU/day is a safe beginning dose. Many people have to take 5,000-10,000IU/day to get their levels back to a healing, normal level. Remember

your body will make 20,000IU in 15 minutes if you are on a beach, in a swimsuit, at high noon on the equator. Our bodies are made to make and use vitamin D. It helps activate and balance your immune system, quiet inflammation, and fight bacterial and viral infections.

ANTIOXIDANTS: Think vitamin C, vitamin E, minerals like selenium and zinc, and lipoic acid (often taken as a supplement, but it is found in the skins of many vegetables). 2 grams of vitamin C a day improves wound healing, and between 20-50mg of antioxidants a day improves wound healing.

B VITAMINS: B vitamins, especially the activated forms of vitamins B6, B12, and folic acid, help people with neuropathy grow nerves to new skin within a year. The activated forms of these essential vitamins are pyridoxine 5 phosphate (B6), methylcobalamin (B12) and methylfolate (folic acid). Taking 50 MG of activated B6/2 MG of activated B12/3.5 MG of activated folic acid a day can help grow new nerves within 6-12 months.

PROBIOTICS-FRIENDLY BACTERIA: A normal balance of friendly bacteria is essential in your intestines to balance your immune system and bring improved healing. Fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, kim chi, and miso all have high levels of the friendly bacteria, lactobacillus and bifidobacter. You can incorporate more of these foods in your daily nutritional regimen. Remember that friendly healthy bacteria need fiber.

The therapeutic doses of bacteria are between 20-50 billion a day to start. It is hard to receive that many probiotics through food, so for convenience you can get probiotics at your local health food store. Brand names include: Jarrow, Now, and Primal Defense. If you are taking antibiotics from your doctor, take the probiotics between doses. For example, if you are taking antibiotics in the morning and evening, use the probiotics during lunch or midday.

Minimizing wheat and sugar in your diet helps bring balance to the friendly bacteria that help you heal. Now is great time to change some of the wheat containing foods in your diet and add more green leafy vegetables. Go with a corn tortilla or spelt tortilla wraps for a bread substitute.

There are some simple things we all can do to help our bodies heal from the inside out!

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