



*Photo credit: CDC, Amanda Mills*



## **Healing Nutrients Fact Sheet: Eat Right, Ready to Fight!**

If you are Wounded, Ill or Injured (WII), you may now find yourself in a new battle – fighting to heal and recover. To increase your chances of the quickest and best recovery possible, fuel and hydrate your body for healing with proper nutrition and fluids. When you eat right and hydrate, you give your body the resources it needs to help repair tissues, fight disease and infection, and even assist in the recovery process from brain trauma.

### **Effects of Improper Nutrition on Healing**

Improper nutrition and hydration presents challenges to you as a WII member. Indicators of improper nutrition and/or hydration include being underweight, overweight, or obese. Further impacts from improper nutrition and hydration include:

- Potential increased recovery time
- Improper fitting of prostheses and/or adaptive clothing
- Difficulties being active among persons with amputations
- Increased risk for infection
- Poor wound healing<sup>1</sup>

Ensuring proper nutrition and hydration, and maintaining healthy weight involves balancing the foods and drinks you consume with your basic caloric and fluid needs. There may be special considerations for calories and fluid needs related to treatment, recovery, and activity level.



The same amount of ENERGY IN (calories consumed) and ENERGY OUT (calories burned) over time = weight staying the same.<sup>2</sup> Hydration needs will vary depending on your condition. However, the standard rule of thumb involves dividing your weight in pounds by two. The result is your daily baseline fluid need in ounces. For example, a 160 pound person would require 80 ounces (10 cups) of fluid per day unless otherwise indicated by a healthcare provider.<sup>3</sup>

## Healing Nutrients Table

To ensure you meet nutritional challenges head on, it is important to fuel your healing and recovery with nutrient-dense foods that contain certain properties that can aid in healing and resilience. In addition to protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats, select nutrient-dense foods that contain Vitamins A and C, as well as Zinc, all of which are essential to healing.

Nutrient & Healing	Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA)	Whole Food Sources	Practical Example
<b>Lean Proteins</b> help your body build and maintain muscle mass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.66g/kg body weight<sup>4</sup> (.3 g/lb body weight) (Protein needs may be higher during peak periods of healing or treatment )</li> </ul>	Choice grades of meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, tofu, beans, peas, legumes, quinoa	1 cup chopped or diced chicken (~4 oz) = 28 grams protein <sup>5</sup>
<b>Carbohydrates</b> give your body energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>130 grams/day (minimum)</li> </ul>	Whole grains, quinoa, brown rice, fruits, vegetables	1 cup of brown rice = ~45 grams carbohydrates <sup>6</sup>
<b>Healthy Fats</b> are essential for normal body function and can help fight inflammation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a person with a 2,000 calorie a day diet = 6 teaspoons<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	Olive oil, canola oil, walnuts, almonds, fatty fish such as salmon & mackerel	1 teaspoon of olive oil = 9 grams of fat <sup>8</sup>
<b>**Vitamin A</b> promotes cell growth and development, bone development and immune system functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men = 2080 IU</li> <li>Women = 1665 IU</li> <li>Do not exceed 3,000 Mcg (10,000 IU)</li> </ul>	Liver, sweet potatoes, carrots, mango, turnip greens, spinach, papaya, red bell peppers	One medium sweet potato contains ~1,096 RAE (3650 IU) Vitamin A <sup>9</sup>
<b>Vitamin C</b> helps your body form collagen, a protein needed for strength and flexibility; it repairs tendons and ligaments and strengthen bones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men = 75 milligrams</li> <li>Women = 60 milligrams</li> <li>Do not exceed 2,000 milligrams</li> <li>*RDA for smokers is 35 mg higher</li> </ul>	Oranges, fruit juices, red bell peppers, strawberries, baked potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, papaya, cantaloupe	One 8 oz glass of orange juice provides 83.7 mg Vitamin C <sup>10</sup>
<b>Zinc</b> is a critical component of wound healing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men = 9.4 milligrams</li> <li>Women = 6.8 milligrams</li> <li>Do not exceed 40 milligrams</li> </ul>	Red meat, seafood (crab and lobster), sunflower seeds, almonds	One ¼ pound hamburger contains ~2.52 milligrams Zinc <sup>11</sup>
<p>* The recommended daily allowances (RDA) in the table above are provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and reflect general guidelines for men and women ages 19-30. Please follow the advice of a physician for specific requirements.  **Vitamin A can be stored by the body, and too much could damage the liver. Avoid Vitamin A supplements unless you have first consulted with your medical provider.</p>			



## Meal Planning for WII

Proper nutrition is about balancing the foods and drinks you consume with basic nutrition needs, special healing requirements, and activity level. Planning your meals in advance can help ensure you not only meet basic caloric needs, but also your needs for key nutrients that aid in recovery. To help plan your meals, take advantage of our [Meals that Heal Guide](#) that includes a section on meal planning.

## Additional Resources

For more information, visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's [General Nutrition](#) Web page or consult [Benefits and Strategies for a Healthy Weight](#).

## References

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