



Southport and
Ormskirk Hospital
NHS Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

Nutrition

North West Regional Spinal Injuries
Centre

WHY IS NUTRITION IMPORTANT?

For the maintenance of a healthy body.

Whenever you pick up a newspaper or magazine these days you are more than likely to find at least one article on food and health related matters.

There is no doubt that what we eat greatly affects our health - in the general population alone.

A diet which is high in fat is known to be one of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease heart attacks and strokes, which is the leading cause of death in the U.K.

Diet is estimated to be linked to between 10 – 70% of all cancers, particularly some of the common cancers, such as the large bowel and stomach.

Diet is the main contributory factor in the development of obesity - nearly half the British Population is overweight.

Keeping an eye on the fat content of your diet is just one of a number of important aspects of a healthy eating plan.

No single food contains all the nutrients required to maintain health, which is why you need to vary your diet.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN FOOD GROUPS WHAT IS THEIR SOURCE AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Carbohydrates:

Are a source of energy. Can be found in foods such as potatoes/pasta/rice/cereals/bread.

These foods are often called starchy foods and can be filling.

Wholegrain varieties are better because they contain more dietary fibre.

You must remember though that unused carbohydrates are converted to fat.

Fats/Oils:

These foods are also a source of energy. However, a small amount of fat is loaded with calories and not very filling. They are important to include in your diet because they provide some vitamins.

Such foods include sweets/chocolates/butter/dairy products/fried foods/fatty meats e.g. Lamb or duck/some fish e.g. Mackerel or kippers/processed foods/'snack' foods. Try to have small amounts of this food group. Use low fat spreads.

Protein:

Used for muscle building. Needed for optimum cell function. A lack of protein can result in poor healing. Protein can also be used as a source of energy once carbohydrate and fat stores have been used.

Foods which are high in protein include meat/fish/dairy products. Also a source of vitamins, minerals and calcium. Try to choose lean cuts of meat. White meat such, as chicken is healthier.

Fibre:

Needed to maintain gut function. A healthy diet which is high in fibre can enhance your bowel regime and reduce the need for aperients.

This type of food tends to be low in fat/calories and is filling. Can be found in fruit/vegetables/wholemeal bread/pasta/beans/lentils.

Fruit & Vegetables:

Source of vitamins and minerals. Most fruits are a good source of food to snack upon. Low in fat and calories.

Don't forget the amount of calories contained in alcohol. This will inevitably cause weight gain.

HAVE YOUR NUTRITIONAL NEEDS CHANGED SINCE YOUR INJURY?

The answer to this question is likely to be yes. Although in the initial period following your accident you are likely to have experienced some weight loss — some of you more than others for a variety of reasons. Now that your condition is stable your energy requirements are reduced. This is directly proportional to the level of your injury.

If you do not consider your diet and resume to eat as you did prior to injury when you were more physically active, then undesirable weight gain is likely to occur.

It is important that you leave the spinal unit knowing what your ideal weight is and the many reasons for staying within it. Try to avoid excessive weight loss or weight gain.

Weight gain will occur if:

ENERGY CONSUMED > ENERGY USED (calories eaten)

Weight loss will occur if:

ENERGY USED > ENERGY CONSUMED

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO AVOID WEIGHT GAIN?

LOSS OF PHYSICAL INDEPENDENCE

Transfers along with other daily activities of daily living become increasingly difficult - think about the strain put on your partner/family

LOW SELF ESTEEM/EFFECT ON SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

In extreme cases patients have been restricted to bed rest because carers can no longer get them out of bed due to manual handling legislation. The need for larger wheelchairs due to excessive weight gain, can result in the inability to get through the doors and consequently in and out of the house

INCREASED RISK OF PRESSURE SORE FORMATION

- Cushion may no longer be suitable
- Increased difficulty transferring
- Changes in posture

NEED FOR MORE HIGH TECH. EQUIPMENT/CARERS IN THE HOME TO MEET YOUR NEEDS

Not only does this result in an increased cost to the health service but it can also be restrictive to you and your family. Lack of privacy and restriction to your lifestyle can be a result.

RESPIRATORY COMPROMISE

Your consultant is very concerned about this factor and will strive for you to avoid weight gain.

Following spinal cord injury, particularly patients with a cervical/thoracic injury, there is already a marked reduction in the ability to achieve full lung expansion due to paralysis of the intercostal muscles and diaphragm.

Weight gain in conjunction with spinal cord injury can increase the demand placed upon the respiratory system.

Long term complications include sleep apnoea (insufficient breathing when asleep)/pulmonary hypertension/cardiac failure. Such complications can result in the need for intervention, which may include night time ventilation.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

As we have already discussed this is directly linked to your diet/obesity. However, the spinal cord injured population may be even more at risk due to lifestyle following your injury. Smoking? Drinking? Lack of physical exercise?

DIABETES

Approximately two thirds of tetraplegic patients have some impairment in carbohydrate metabolism therefore increasing the risk of diabetes.

HOW CAN I MAINTAIN MY WEIGHT ONCE I GET HOME?

TAKE AN INTEREST

Plan/monitor what you are eating. Snack on foods which are low in fat/calories, such as fruit. Choose low fat spreads and cheeses.

If you are going out for a meal then cut down on what you are eating for the rest of the day.

EAT A WELL BALANCED DIET

- high in protein
- low in fat
- avoid too much carbohydrate
- increase the amount of fibre, you eat

The amount of calories you eat in your diet can be increased according to your physical activity.

MONITOR YOUR WEIGHT

Are your clothes too tight? If so do you decide to get the next size or do you try to lose weight?

Wear clothes which have a waistband. If you can't fasten them or they are marking you then this is a sign that you are gaining weight and you need to take some action.

REMEMBER IT IS FAR EASIER TO MONITOR YOUR WEIGHT IN THE BEGINNING. TRYING TO LOSE WEIGHT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.

It is equally important not to lose too much weight as this can lead to problems with your skin and the development of pressure sores.

Consider your diet if you are ill or have a temperature for a lengthy period. If you have a temperature your body's energy requirements increase at a time when you don't feel like eating or drinking. This is a time when supplementary drinks can be useful – ie. Build-Up, Complan, which can be bought from your Pharmacy.

Contact your G.P. or the Spinal Unit if you require any further advice following discharge.

If you would like to discuss any issues raised within this leaflet please see below:

Nurse in Charge
Ward Office 01704 704346

Other sources of information
www.spinalnet.co.uk

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

MATRON

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9.00 to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

Your own GP –

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) - 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) - 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need
this leaflet in an alternative format**

Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust

Ormskirk & District General Hospital
Wigan Road, Ormskirk, L39 2AZ
Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital
Town Lane, Kew, Southport, PR8 6PN
Tel: (01704) 547471

FOR APPOINTMENTS

Telephone (01695) 656680
Email soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net

Please remember to complete the **attached** *Friends and Family Test*.

Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to: southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT

Thank you

Author: Kim Lucey

Ref: 653

Version: 6

Reviewed: February 2018

Next Review: February 2021