Abertawe Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust is committed to preventing patients developing pressure ulcers. This information sheet contains the best dietary advice currently available to help patients avoid developing a pressure ulcer.
Pressure ulcers are caused when the skin and underlying tissues are damaged, however you are at a higher risk of developing a pressure ulcer if you are not eating and drinking enough.

Good nutrition makes the skin healthier and more resistant to ulcers. A healthy balanced diet is therefore very important.

This leaflet contains some tips and ideas to help make sure you are eating the best you can to prevent developing a pressure ulcer.

**The Eatwell Plate**

Aim to balance your diet by choosing from the food groups in the picture below.

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**Vitamin C and Zinc**

Vitamin C has many roles to play in the formation of new tissue and wound healing.

Make sure you are getting enough in your diet by including foods rich in vitamin C and zinc.

If you don’t think you have enough of these foods in your diet, then you may need to take a multivitamin or supplement. Ask your health care team for advice.

**Food High in Vitamin C:**
- Citrus fruits e.g oranges, kiwi
- Vegetables e.g broccoli, peppers
- Fruit juice
- Tomatoes
- Berries e.g strawberries

**Food High in Vitamin Zinc:**
- Red meat
- Unrefined cereals
- Milk and dairy products
- Eggs
- Green leafy vegetables
- Beans
• Adding jam, syrup or honey to breakfast cereals and milk puddings.
• Adding sugar or glucose powder (which is less sweet tasting) to desserts and drinks.

No appetite?

If you are finding it difficult to eat or drink enough, talk to your healthcare team. They may be able to arrange for you to have special ‘Nutritional Supplements’ on prescription.

You may also need a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement to make sure your body gets these important nutrients. Ask your healthcare team for advice.

What if I’m overweight?

Carrying a lot of weight places more pressure on your body, especially if you are not able to move around very much.
Try keeping to a balanced diet and reduce your intake of fat and sugar. Increasing your intake of fruit, vegetables and high fibre foods will help reduce hunger and help you lose weight sensibly.

What if I have diabetes?

As well as good nutrition, good blood glucose control will help wound healing and help prevent pressure ulcers developing.

Protein

Protein is essential to help the body make new tissue. When we don’t eat enough protein our tissues become weaker and when damaged, are slower to heal.

To make sure you are eating enough protein try to have a balanced diet, including a protein food at each meal.

Some protein foods are listed below

- Meat
- Fish
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Pulses
- Lentils/Beans

Fluid

When we become dehydrated our skin becomes less elastic, fragile and more susceptible to breakdown.

You should drink at least 6-8 glasses (1.5 litres) of water or other fluids each day to stop you becoming dehydrated.

Keep a drink beside you and sip it regularly.
Iron is essential in our diet to prevent iron deficiency anaemia.

If we become anaemic our tissues will not be able to receive oxygen as well as normal.

Make sure you are having enough iron in your diet by having plenty of iron-rich foods.

To increase the absorption of iron from our food, have food or drinks high in vitamin C as part of your meal.

Avoid tea with meals as this will reduce the absorption of iron in the body.

Foods High In Iron
- Red meat
- Liver and offal meats
- Poultry
- Green leafy vegetables
- Dried fruit
- Fortified breakfast cereals

Pressure ulcers are more likely to develop if you are under or overweight.

If you are underweight, have lost weight or have a poor appetite, then it is likely that there are less fat stores around your body. Fat stores act as ‘cushions’ around our bones and when they are depleted, damage to our tissues can occur much more easily.

To help restore these fat stores try some of the suggestions listed below:

- Try eating little and often. 5-6 smaller snacks spread throughout the day are easier to manage if you have a poor appetite.
- Choose high energy/high protein snacks in between meals e.g cheese and crackers, full fat yoghurt, cakes or biscuits.
- Have a nourishing drink such as milkshake or milky coffee in between meals.

**Fortify your meals and snacks by:**

- Adding 4 tablespoons of dried milk powder to 1 pint of milk to make enriched milk. Use this throughout the day for cereals, puddings and in drinks.
- Adding grated cheese to soups, casseroles and mashed potato.
- Adding double cream to soups, sauces, mashed potato and desserts.
- Adding butter or margarine to vegetables, pasta and scrambled egg.