

TOA

TENNESSEE ORTHOPAEDIC ALLIANCE

POSTOPERATIVE NUTRITION

Postoperative nutrition plays a critical role in supporting the healing process, reducing complications, and promoting recovery after an injury. Below are some nutrition tips to practice after surgery.



EAT ADEQUATE CALORIES

Despite what you may think, your body requires additional energy to heal and recover from an injury. Ensure you're consuming enough calories to meet your increased energy needs. It is common for appetite to be affected postop. Consuming liquid calories (e.g. smoothies, shakes, and milks) may help you meet your energy needs. Work with your registered dietitian to determine your specific calorie requirements.

PRIORITIZE PROTEIN

Protein is crucial for tissue repair, wound healing, and rebuilding of damaged tissues. Include lean sources of protein in your diet such as poultry, fish, lean meats, eggs, dairy products, legumes, and plant-based protein sources like tofu and tempeh. Aim to distribute your protein intake evenly throughout the day and add protein to at least a quarter of your plate.

NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

Focus on consuming a variety of nutrient-dense foods to support overall health and recovery. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins in your meals. These foods provide essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and phytochemicals necessary for optimal healing.

HYDRATION

Drink enough fluids to stay well-hydrated. Proper hydration supports wound healing, helps maintain bodily functions, and promotes circulation. Water is an optimal choice, but juices and other beverages may also help you meet your fluid requirements. Foods with high water content like soups, fruits, and vegetables also count.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Include sources of omega-3 fatty acids in your diet, such as fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts. Omega-3 fatty acids have anti-inflammatory properties and may help reduce inflammation, aches, and pains associated with injuries.

VITAMIN C FOODS

Vitamin C is essential for collagen production, which is a protein that is crucial for soft tissue healing. Include citrus fruits, berries, kiwi, bell peppers, broccoli, and leafy green vegetables in your diet to obtain an adequate amount of vitamin C. Many fruit juices are also high in vitamin C.

VITAMIN A

Vitamin A boosts the immune systems and promotes tissue repair. It is essential for wound healing because it helps to moderate the inflammatory response in the body. Focus on orange and yellow produce, leafy greens, eggs, and liver to obtain vitamin A.

ANTIOXIDANT-RICH FOODS

Antioxidants fight free radicals in the body. Include foods high in antioxidants to support the healing process and reduce oxidative stress. Colorful fruits and vegetables, such as berries, leafy greens, citrus fruits, and bell peppers, are excellent sources of antioxidants.

AVOID OR LIMIT

INFLAMMATORY FOODS

Some foods may add to inflammation in the body, potentially slowing the healing process. Minimize consumption of highly processed foods, refined sugars, excessive alcohol, and unhealthy fats. Focus on whole, unprocessed options as much as possible.