

Burns & Plastic Surgery Treatment Centre

Nutrition for Burn Injuries

Children with a burn need about 2-3 times more energy (calories) and protein than normal. Their need for vitamins and minerals also increases.

Nutrition (or getting enough protein, energy, vitamins and minerals) is very important for wound healing and to make sure that your child continues to grow normally. Good nutrition also reduces the risk of infections, breakdown of wounds and grafts and will help you return home quicker.

There are many reasons why your child may not be able to eat enough food such as:

- The shock and trauma of the burn
- Drowsiness from drugs, pain and fear related to burn washing and dressing
- The hours fasting for baths and graft operations
- Time spent in physiotherapy or at other appointments
- Being in hospital itself in unfamiliar surroundings and with unfamiliar foods

At a time when your child needs more energy and protein than normal eating and drinking is often difficult to manage. Special attention is needed to make sure your child is meeting his or her nutritional needs. When you are an inpatient the ward dietitian can advise you on the best feeding plan for your child. At any time if you would like to speak with your dietitian ask your Nurse to arrange this for you.

Children often go backwards with their ability or willingness to eat. This is normal for children who have a burn, especially young children.

Tips to encourage your child to eat and drink include:

- Offer small amounts of healthy food frequently throughout the day. Aim for 5-6 small meals or snacks each day. (see picture of The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating)
- Encourage foods you feel they can manage.
- Offer food that is familiar to your child.
- Favourite foods and home cooked meals can be supplied from home.
- Drinks such as milk are very important when children are not eating much, especially for babies and toddlers. Offer milk drinks regularly over the day at least at each meal and snack time. The dietitian can advise you on the best choice for your child and how much he or she should be drinking.
- Keep positive when offering food and drink. Offer positive praise when your child eats or drinks no matter how small. Avoiding battles over food will help to keep meal and snack times an enjoyable and interactive time for your child. It is normal for your child to not eat much at this time.
- When on the ward Dietary Assistants deliver a menu to your child daily and they are available to help with menu selections. Ask your nurse to contact a Dietary Assistant on 52238 if needed.

What drinks to offer?

The best drinks to offer are high in calories and protein such as milk.

- For children less than 12 months breastfeeding or infant formula is the best.
- For children older than one year milk drinks are the best to choose. These are available from the ward kitchen and suggestions include:
 - plain and flavoured milk ("Moove")
 - milkshakes (milkshake maker and ice cream in ward kitchen)
- The dietitian can advise whether additional calories/nutrients or tube feeds are required.
- High energy milk, high protein milk or sustagen (only for children older than 3 years) can be arranged by the dietitian.
- Other drinks include fruit juice, cordial and soft drinks but these contain sugar only, no protein, little vitamins and minerals and fewer calories than milk drinks. Only offer small volumes of these for variety. High energy juices are available - just ask the dietitian.
- Water is a great fluid but it doesn't contain any calories, protein or vitamins/minerals. Again it is best to only offer small volumes of water for variety and concentrate on giving your child milk instead.
- If your child does not like milk soy or other alternatives are available. Please discuss this with the dietitian.

The best drink for your child is:

Ideal intake each day: (mls)

What foods to offer?

The best foods to offer are full of energy, protein and nutrients (vitamins/minerals).

These include:

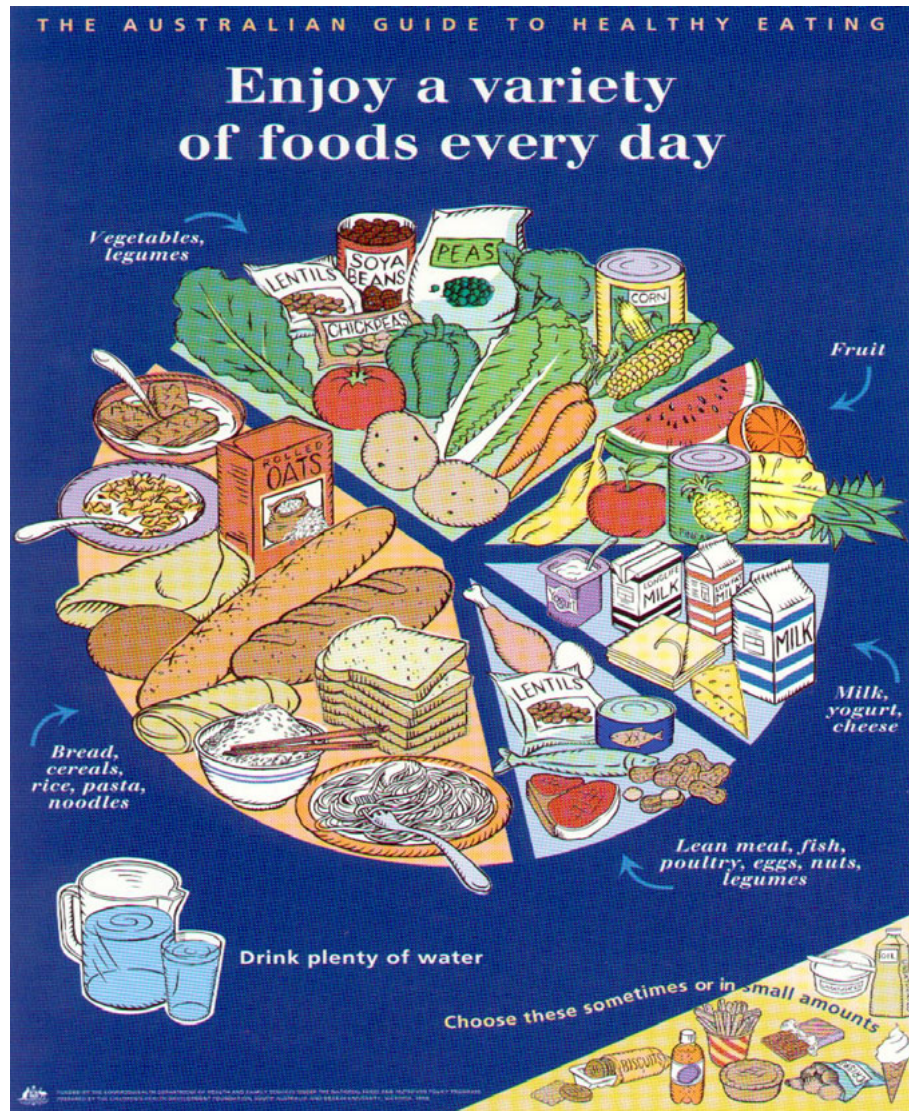
- Dairy products* - milk, yoghurt, custard, ice cream, cheese and soy products
- Meat group - red meat, chicken, fish, eggs, baked beans, lentils, chick peas, hummus

Other foods to be encouraged each day include:

- All types of fruit- fresh, canned or dried
- All types of vegetables such as potato, pumpkin, carrot, broccoli and peas
- All types of breads, cereals, rice and pastas

Offer these foods to your child every 2-3 hrs. Avoid less nutritious foods such as lollies, juice, chips and chocolate. A small amount of these is fine as long as your child is eating healthy foods too.

* If your child has an allergy to cow's milk, is lactose intolerant or doesn't like cow's milk, a good nutritious alternative is calcium fortified soy based foods such as soy milk, soy yoghurt and custard. If you are an inpatient ask the dietary assistant that drops off you menu to organise this for your child.



Not enough?

If your child is not drinking/eating enough energy and protein they may require nutrition via a tube. The dietitian will discuss with you the appropriate type of liquid (formula) and volume to be given to meet your child's requirements.

Need help?

If your child is an inpatient and you have any further questions regarding

- Nutrition: ask to see the Dietitian
- The menu: ask your nurse to contact a Dietary Assistant from the Diet Office

If you are an outpatient and need advice contact the Dept. of Nutrition & Dietetics on (02) 9845-2225 and ask to speak to the Burns Dietitian.

A fact sheet called High Energy Additions to Foods is available on the hospital website.