

# Vulvar Surgery: A guide to healthy eating



the women's  
the royal women's hospital

## Without good nutrition, wounds may take longer to heal.

In the days and weeks before your surgery, it is a good idea to eat a well balanced diet and avoid losing weight. Before your surgery, your doctor or nurse will ask if you have lost weight without trying or feel like eating less. They may refer you to a dietitian for a nutritional assessment and advice.

### What is a nutritious diet?

Healthy eating for wound healing means eating a wide variety of foods from each of the five food groups:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Grain foods such as breads, cereals, rice, and pasta (mostly wholegrain or wholemeal varieties)
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, seeds and legumes
- Milk, yoghurt and cheese (or calcium-enriched alternatives).

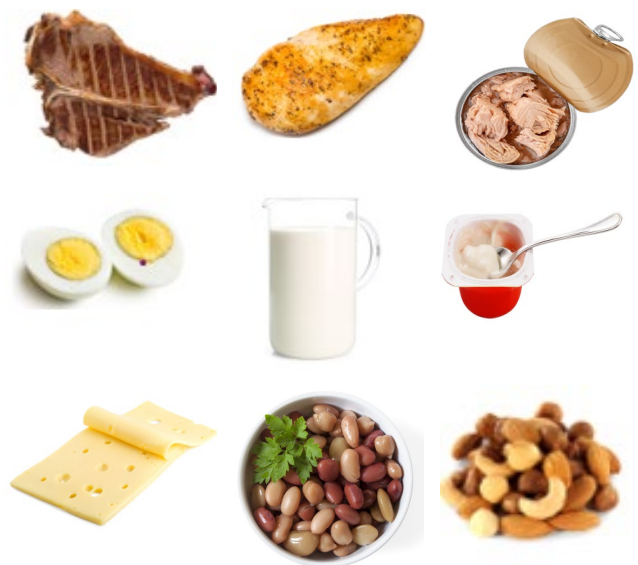
Eating a range of foods from each of the food groups will help to make sure that you are getting all the nutrients your body needs.

As well as choosing a good variety of foods, you may need extra protein and calories (also known as kilojoules). This is because your body needs more nutrients to heal properly after surgery.

### Increasing protein in your diet

Protein is needed to grow new healthy tissue. Protein-rich foods include:

- Meat, chicken and fish
- Eggs
- Milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Legumes, nuts (and nut pastes), seeds and tofu



Eating protein-rich foods at each main meal is a good way to increase your protein intake.

You may also like to include some of these foods as snacks in between meals to further boost your intake (for example, a handful of nuts, yoghurt with fruit, or cheese and crackers).

## Increasing energy in your diet

Here are some ways to increase your energy (calorie) intake:

- Aim for six small meals rather than three larger meals per day.
- Add (or fortify) your meals with high energy/calorie foods. For example, add extra olive oil, butter or margarine to cooked vegetables, rice and pasta, or cream into porridge or soup.
- Regularly include high energy/calorie foods, such as cheese, avocado, nuts and nut spreads, and dips.
- In addition to water, drink some fluids that provide energy/calories as well such as milk, milkshakes and juice.

## After your surgery

It can sometimes be hard to eat and drink enough to meet your body's nutritional needs, especially if you are feeling unwell, tired and experiencing pain. It is important to try and order a range of items from the hospital menu at each mealtime, and to snack in between meals.

Your healthcare team may recommend that you see a dietitian after your surgery. A dietitian can work with you to develop a healthy eating plan and make sure that you are getting the nutrients you need to recover. Even if you have a good appetite and are finishing most meals, you may still need nutrition support in the form of extra foods and special high energy (calorie) and high protein supplement drinks to help meet your nutritional requirements.

## Going home

Once you leave the hospital, it's important to keep up with regular meals and snacks to support your healing and physical recovery. Your dietitian may also provide you with a course of nutritional supplement drinks to continue at home. Once healing is complete, you may be able to move from a high energy high protein diet, back to a healthy, balanced diet. Your dietitian will provide individualised nutrition advice that is tailored to your needs.

## Contact

Nutrition and Dietetics

The Royal Women's Hospital

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[thewomens.org.au](http://thewomens.org.au)

## Do you need an interpreter?



If you need an interpreter remember you can ask for one.

## Related information on the Women's website

- Vulvar surgery: About the surgery and going home

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