Spinal Cord Injury and the Importance of Good Nutrition

Margaret Loeper Vasquez, MS RDN
Director Nutrition and Food Service,
Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Boston
Clinical Associate
Boston University and Framingham State University

Nutrition Plays Vital Role

- supporting and keeping our bodies healthy
- preventing/minimizing health complications
- preventing nutrient deficiencies
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Specifically for those with a SCI

- Enhances natural healing potential
- Fulfills higher need for nutrients
- Helps prevent secondary complications
- Targets causes – not just symptoms

People with SCI experience an average of 7 health complications per year:

- Digestive dysfunction
- Constipation/bowel obstruction
- Diarrhea
- UTI’s
- Obesity
- Pressure Sores
- Osteoporosis
- Arthritis
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Pain
- Sleep disorders
Overall Nutrition for SCI

1. Protein
   - Essential for growth and repair of new tissue
   - Needs increase for wound healing (85-95% risk of developing)
   - 2-3 servings/day
   - Serving size = palm of your hand
     - Red meat
     - Chicken/Turkey breast
     - Eggs
     - Plain Greek yogurt
     - Cottage cheese
     - Protein powder

2. Fruit
   - 1-2 servings/day
   - Provide enzymes that support digestive function
   - Whole fruits high in fiber
     - 1 Cup of Berries
     - 1 Apple/1 Nectarine/1 Orange/1 Pear
     - 15 Cherries
     - 3 Apricots/2 Kiwis
     - ½ cup Cranberries/Blueberries
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Overall Nutrition for SCI

3. Grains
- Whole grains high in fiber, higher in protein
- Serving size = ½ cup or 1 slice of bread
  - Quinoa
  - Steel cut oats/rolled oats
  - Brown rice
  - Spelt
  - Millet
  - Wheatberries

4. Lentils/Legumes
- High in fiber, absorbs water, helps bulk stool
- 1-2 servings/day
- Serving size = 1/3 cup cooked
  - Beans (kidney, black, navy, etc)
  - Hummus
  - Lentils (red, yellow, green)
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5. Vegetables

- Supportive digestive enzymes
- Vitamins & Minerals needed for wound healing:
  - A, C, E & Zinc
- Supports immune system
- 5+ servings/day
- Serving size = ½ cup
  - Broccoli/Cauliflower
  - Asparagus/Cabbage
  - Sweet potato
  - Beets/carrots
  - Dark leafy greens

6. Fats

- Maintains skin integrity
- Soften stools/Lubricates bowel
- 2 servings healthy fat/day
- Serving size = 1Tbsp of oil or ¼ cup of nuts and seeds
  - Olives/Olive oil
  - Avocados/oil
  - Flax seeds/oil
  - Nuts and seeds
  - Nut and seed butters
  - Chia seeds
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Overall Nutrition for SCI

7. Fluids!!
- Imperative for bowel function and prevention of UTI’s
- Flushes toxins
- Helps skin heal quickly
- 6-8 Cups of water/fluids per
- Serving size = 1 cup or 8 oz (240mls)
  - Unsweetened Herbal teas
  - Water
  - Seltzer water
  - Broths
  - Soups
  - Cranberry or Blueberry juice

Avoid
- Refined Carbohydrates – White flour, white pasta, cakes, cookies, bagels
- Trans fats – salad dressings, crackers, frozen dinners, commercial baked goods
- Avoid added sugar, soda
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Overall Nutrition for SCI

Add
- Spices!! Cinnamon, Tumeric, Cumin
- Salsas, Chutneys, Vegetable relishes
- Daily vitamins
  - Multivitamin
  - Vitamin C (1000-2000mg/day)
  - Omega 3 (2-4, 1000mg/day)
  - Probiotic (1/day)
  - Vitamin D (3000-4000IU/day)

Nutrition for SCI

- Whole foods
- Variety of colors
- Avoid processed foods
- Multivitamin daily
- Probiotic daily
- FLUIDS!