

Tips to Help You Heal Faster

Don't use tobacco

Using tobacco causes blood vessels to constrict and become smaller. When your blood vessels are smaller, it's harder for oxygen and nutrients to get to your wound to help it heal. This means it will take longer for your wound to heal.

Also, smoke from tobacco has carbon monoxide. When carbon monoxide gets into your lungs, it binds to red blood cells, taking the place of oxygen. This means your red blood cells will not have enough oxygen to carry to the wound. Without healthy blood cells circulating and carrying oxygen to the wound, the healing time takes longer and your chance for infection increases.

If you use tobacco of any kind, quit. For information about quitting, call the Kaiser Permanente Resource Line at 1-800-992-2279.

Eat healthy foods

Eating a well-balanced diet full of healthy foods gives your body the vitamins, protein, and other nutrients it needs to help you heal.

- Eat a variety of foods from these food groups:
 - Bread, cereal, rice and pasta (6-11 servings/day)
 - Vegetables (3-5 servings/day)
 - Fruits (2-4 servings/day)
 - Milk, yogurt, and cheese (2-3 servings/day)
 - Meat, poultry, fish, dried beans, eggs, and nuts (2-3 servings/day)
- Eat foods high in protein such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, beans, tofu, and peanut butter.
- Eat foods high in vitamin C. Good food sources include citrus fruits (grapefruit, oranges, and tangerines), strawberries, cantaloupe, papaya, mango, bell peppers, red peppers, tomatoes, and potatoes.
- Vitamin A is also important for wound healing. Food sources include fortified milk, cheese and margarine, eggs, spinach, dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, apricots, cantaloupe, squash, carrots, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin.
- It's best to get your nutrients from food, but if it's hard for you to eat a variety of foods, you might need to take a multivitamin or mineral supplement.

Keep your blood sugar under control

If you have diabetes, work closely with your health care team to control your blood sugar levels. Good blood sugar control is important in helping you heal and lower your chances for complications. You can get good control by following your plan for meals, medicines, and physical activity.

Watch for infection

Your chances of getting an infection are higher if you have a wound. Good hygiene, including washing your hands often, can help keep you from getting an infection.

Signs of infection include:

- More tenderness or pain in the area of the wound.
- Redness around the wound.
- Swelling that gets worse.
- Bad smell coming from the wound.
- Pain that doesn't get better with pain medicine.
- More drainage coming from the wound.
- Fever with a temperature of 101°F or higher.

Call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.

For medical concerns after clinic hours, Kaiser Permanente members can call the **Consulting Nurse Service** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 1-800-297-6877.