

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Wounds - What makes them heal?

Are nutrition, vitamins, circulation, and good health important to help wounds heal? Of course, but let me discuss a common misconception of healing. "Better nutrition will make the wound heal." And "if vitamins are good for healing then more vitamins are better." Well the answer is yes and no.

I often hear patients state that they are taking vitamin C as a supplement to help their leg wound heal. Good nutrition helps wounds heal but is not necessary. Let me use vitamin C as an example. We all know that there is a disease called Scurvy that sailors got during the times of early exploration of the world. Often no fresh fruits or vegetables were consumed for many months at sea. Sailors were noticed to heal poorly than normal when injured, but they still healed. It just took more time or was not as strong as normal. I doubt that doctors see this condition, a lack of vitamin C, in the U.S. It would be difficult to totally avoid all sources of fruits and vegetables for so long a time.

A mild level of malnutrition probably has no effect on wound healing. Taking extra vitamin C will certainly not accelerate healing. And if a little is good a lot is not necessarily better. Some vitamins as A and D may actually result in severe illness if consumed in large quantities. Another example is vitamin B 12. The chemical name is cyanocobalamin. It contains cyanide. Now we all know that cyanide is a poison yet we must have it in our body to exist. A little tiny bit is necessary for life but a little bit more will kill you.

As it turns out sick patients have more than one problem that contributes to poor healing. Nutrition is usually that last problem. Most important is probably a lack of enough circulation. This probably accounts for over 90% of wound problems. I value nutrition as only accounting for 1 or 2 % of wound healing problems. Smoking cigarettes, certain drugs such as steroids and diseases as diabetes result in delayed healing.

Common sense is needed. One patient was spending \$ 20 a week on nutritional supplements and asked my opinion about how to better their health. I suggested they save \$ 30 a week by just eating a balanced diet without supplements and by ceasing to smoke cigarettes.

Nutrition is of importance for wound healing. However, it is more often poor circulation, drugs, the presence of other uncontrolled diseases and self abuse that results in diminished healing. And doctors cannot make wounds heal. Your body heals at whatever rate it has the capacity for. We can only assist your body's own capabilities.

**The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.
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Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company

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