

Nutrition

After a brain injury, maintaining a nutritious and well-balanced diet is important to continue your healing and recovery. Initially after a brain injury, the body often requires high amounts of calories and protein to repair damaged cells. Muscle atrophy is also common because of decreased mobility during this time. Many individuals with brain injuries lose a significant amount of weight when first injured. There may also be problems with chewing, swallowing, and digestion that interfere with nutritional intake. As an individual with a brain injury recovers, problems with digestion and consuming adequate calories often resolve, and calorie and protein needs usually return to baseline.

Unusual eating behaviors like overeating or excessive consumption of liquids may occur after a brain injury. You may forget that you had recently eaten or may forget to eat. Additionally, changes in the metabolism of nutrients may result in increased feelings of hunger or the lack of feeling satisfied after a meal. It is often helpful to set and maintain a schedule for eating meals and snacks. Choose foods/fluids that are safe for you to eat/drink; check with your Speech Language Pathologist regarding your appropriate diet texture. Refer to the Trouble Swallowing section for dysphagia diet specifics. Your dietitian may recommend nutrition supplements such as Ensure, Boost, or Equate drinks to help you meet your nutrition needs following your injury. The diet, supplements, or tube feeding may need to be adjusted after discharge to meet weight and health goals. Notify your doctor or dietitian if you have significant weight changes or changes in oral intake.