



Knowledge in Motion
Lecture Series
Living Healthy
with Spinal Cord Injury

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



Spinal Cord Injury and the
Importance of Good Nutrition

Nutrition Plays Vital Role

- supporting and keeping our bodies healthy
- preventing/minimizing health complications
- preventing nutrient deficiencies



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



Overall Nutrition for SCI

2. Fruit

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



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



Overall Nutrition for SCI

4. Lentils/Legumes

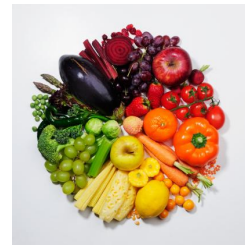
- High in fiber, absorbs water, helps bulk stool
- 1-2 servings/day
- Serving size = 1/3 cup cooked
 - ❖ Beans (kidney, black, navy, etc)
 - ❖ Hummus
 - ❖ Lentils (red, yellow, green)



Overall Nutrition for SCI

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



Overall Nutrition for SCI

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



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 = 1cup or 8oz (240mls)
 - ❖ Unsweetened Herbal teas
 - ❖ Water
 - ❖ Seltzer water
 - ❖ Broths
 - ❖ Soups
 - ❖ Cranberry or Blueberry juice



Overall Nutrition for SCI

Avoid

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



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!

