



## Understanding Your Nutritional Status

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You have sustained an injury, and expect it will take 3 to 4 weeks to heal. However, 3 to 4 weeks later you and your physiotherapist are baffled as to why your treatment is taking longer than anticipated. Muscles are feeling fatigued and painful, and your back won't allow full range of movement.

Careful dietary assessment may be what is needed. Individuals with limited mobility, lack of strength and/or pain need to ensure that they are having adequate energy, protein, fibre, vitamin and mineral intake.

To determine your nutritional health you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- Has an illness or condition made me change the kind and/or amount of food I eat?
- Do I eat fewer than 2 meals per day?
- Do I eat less than 2 servings of fruits, vegetables, and/or milk products per day?
- Without trying, have I lost or gained 10 lbs in the last 6 months? \*

Many of the symptoms and /or conditions you are experiencing maybe due to your nutritional status; for example, low iron levels can help decrease the amount of oxygen that is being delivered to the muscles resulting in quicker muscle fatigue and slower healing. Back pain can be slow to heal if there is a decrease in calcium (this may contribute to the condition of osteopenia or osteoporosis).

Improving nutritional status can improve body movement, daily activity levels and organ functions. Through assessing energy needs and nutrient requirements experts can determine the cause of some of the body's limitations.

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions this does not necessarily mean that you have a malnutrition problem or that self-medication with multivitamins is the answer. What needs to be determined are the causes and/or reasons for the lack of improvement and whether this may be due to a potential nutrient deficiency. If further investigation is required it is best done through a doctor and a registered dietitian.

\* Adapted from Ross Products Division, Abbott Laboratories LTD; January 2000.