

Good Nutrition During Lactation

During lactation, it is important to eat well to provide the needed nutrition for you and your baby. Breastfeeding requires extra calories and protein. Eat 3 balanced meals and healthy snacks to meet all your nutritional needs. Include plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean protein sources in your diet. It is very important to continue to eat 3 servings from the milk group to get the calcium needed for your baby's bones and to maintain your own bones. Check choosemyplate.gov for recommendations specific to your body and needs.

Breastfeeding advantages

For baby:

- Supplies the needed fluid and nutrients for the first 6 months of life
- Is easier to digest than formula
- Offers possible protection against developing allergies, ear infections, gastrointestinal and respiratory infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Passes immunity from mother to baby to help fight infection
- Lowers the risk of childhood obesity, diabetes, leukemia and lymphoma
- In some studies, has been linked to higher IQ scores in later childhood

For mom:

- Helps the uterus return to normal size
- May aid gradual weight loss after pregnancy
- Is less expensive and more convenient than formula
- May reduce your risk of developing uterine and breast cancer
- Enhances bonding with your baby

To help your baby get the full benefits that breast milk provides, breastfeed your baby exclusively for the first 6 months. That means your baby gets no other foods or fluids unless directed by your physician. Begin solid foods at 6 months, but continue to breastfeed through the first year (or as long as you and your baby would like).

Infant feeding

- Milk production is guided by the baby's feeding. The more the baby nurses, the more milk is produced.
- The best way to ensure milk supply is to provide frequent feedings (every 2 to 3 hours).
- If you have to skip a feeding, use a breast pump to remove milk from your breasts. This will help to maintain your milk supply and prevent engorgement.

- Breast milk provides all of the infant's nutritional needs. Extra fluid or infant formula usually is not needed unless recommended by your baby's pediatrician.
- Growth spurts occur at about 5 days of age, 2 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months and 6 months. Infant feeding increases during these times, as will the milk supply.

Remember

- Eating for breastfeeding is very similar to the diet recommended during pregnancy.
- Weight loss during breastfeeding should not be more than 1 pound per week. Restricting calories too much may decrease your milk supply.
- Continue to take your prenatal vitamins, if prescribed by your physician. Consider a calcium supplement if you do not eat 3 servings of dairy per day.
- Eat at least 3 meals per day to provide good nutrition for yourself and your baby. If you are hungry or are losing weight too quickly, add 2 to 3 healthy snacks daily.
- Try to eat 8 to 12 ounces of seafood per week to get a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. Avoid tilefish, shark, swordfish and king mackerel. Limit tuna to 6 ounces per week.

Factors that affect breast milk

Fluid intake

Drink fluids to thirst. Milk and water are the best choices. Some women may become thirsty during feedings. If this occurs, it may be helpful to drink something at that time. Fluid intake should be increased during exercise and hot weather.

Caffeine

Newborns cannot completely break down caffeine until 8 to 9 months of age. Large amounts of caffeine may cause the baby to be irritable and slow the letdown reflex. If you are drinking caffeinated beverages, limit them to no more than 1 to 2 cups per day.

Herbal teas

You may drink herbal teas from the grocery store, if taken in normal amounts (1 to 2 cups per day). Be wary of unusual teas and packages without an ingredient list. Always ask your physician before using herbal teas.

Alcohol

Check with your pediatrician about alcohol consumption during breastfeeding. Alcohol could affect the letdown reflex, and may cause poor development and growth in newborns. Drinking beer does not increase milk supply, as many may believe.

Food allergies and sensitivities

Most babies have no problem with the foods mom eats. However, some babies may show the following signs during or after feeding:

- Fussiness
- More gas or discomfort than usual
- More spitting up
- Rash

The most common food cause for these symptoms is dairy products in your diet. But, some babies may be sensitive to the following foods:

- Soy
- Eggs
- Corn
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Spicy foods
- Gas-forming foods such as broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and onions

If it seems that the foods you eat cause these problems, limit or avoid eating them for 10 to 14 days. Then, begin adding them to your meals one at a time, and watch for symptoms in your baby.

Food allergies are rare in babies who only have breastmilk. Contact your baby's pediatrician if your baby shows any of the following signs:

- Severe colic
- Skin rash
- Vomiting
- Excessive diarrhea
- Blood in the stool

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away if your baby has difficulty breathing.

Weight control tips

- Long-term weight control consists of 3 parts: diet, exercise and behavior change.
- Do not follow fad diets.
- Do not follow diets that eliminate certain foods or food groups in order to lose weight.
- Eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Use skim milk and non-fat dairy products.
- Limit total fat, specifically saturated fat; use light or reduced-calorie foods.
- Skip fried foods.

Sample menu

Breakfast	
1 medium orange	1 cup oatmeal with 2 tablespoons of raisins
2 slices whole wheat toast	2 teaspoons jam
Decaffeinated coffee	Skim milk (8 ounces = 1 serving dairy)
Lunch	
1 1/2 to 2 cups bean soup	Whole grain roll
1 cup tossed salad with low-fat dressing	1/2 cantaloupe
Low-fat yogurt (8 ounces = 1 serving dairy)	
Dinner	
2 to 3 ounces fish (any variety) broiled with lemon juice	Large baked potato with 3 ounces plain, non-fat yogurt
1 cup steamed green beans	
Skim milk (8 ounces = 1 serving dairy)	1 ounce dark chocolate
Snack ideas	
Low-fat yogurt (8 ounces = 1 serving dairy)	Dried fruit
Peanut butter crackers	Vegetables and dip (try hummus)
Nuts (one small handful)	Bagel with cheese

These guidelines are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Nutrition therapist _____

Phone _____