

Good Nutrition During Lactation

It is important to eat well while you are breastfeeding to get the nutrition you need 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. Go to myplate.gov for more information about good nutrition.

General recommendations

- The breastfeeding diet is a lot like the diet recommended during pregnancy.
- If your baby is breastfeeding exclusively (no foods, formula or other fluid) you may need to add 300 to 500 calories per day to your regular pre-pregnancy diet.
- Your weight loss during breastfeeding should not be more than 1 pound per week. If you cut too many calories, you may decrease your milk supply.
- Keep taking your prenatal vitamins if prescribed by your physician. You may need a calcium supplement if you cannot or do not eat 3 servings of dairy per day.
- Try to eat 8 to 12 ounces of seafood per week to get a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. If you do not eat seafood, talk with your physician about taking an omega-3 fatty acid supplement. Avoid tilefish, shark, swordfish and king mackerel. Limit tuna to 6 ounces per week.
- Eating at least 3 meals and 2 snacks per day can help you get good nutrition. Listen to your body and do what feels best for you and your baby.

Healthy foods to support your body

Some foods may help your body function better. Foods that contain complex carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, protein and healthy fats are ideal. This, in turn, may help your body produce milk. Try adding some of these to your meal plan:

- Oatmeal
- Green leafy vegetables
- Sweet potatoes
- Papaya
- Salmon
- Legumes and beans
- Nuts (coconut, almonds)
- Apricots
- Beets
- Seeds (flaxseed, sunflower seeds)
- Quinoa
- Avocado
- Mushrooms

Factors that affect breast milk

Fluid intake

Drink fluids whenever you are thirsty. Try to drink 8 to 12 cups of fluid each day. Milk and water are the best choices. You may become thirsty during feedings or pumping. If this happens, it may be helpful to drink something at that time. Drink more fluids during exercise and hot weather.

Caffeine

Newborns cannot completely break down caffeine until they are 8 to 9 months old. Large amounts of caffeine may cause your baby to be irritable. It can also slow your letdown reflex.

Many foods and beverages may contain caffeine.

- Cocoa/chocolate
- Energy drinks
- Coffee (regular and decaffeinated)
- Tea (Please talk to your physician or registered dietitian before drinking herbal tea.)
- Carbonated beverages (soda, pop)
- Sports drinks
- Flavored water

If you drink caffeinated beverages, do not have more than 1 to 2 cups (or 300 milligrams) per day.

Some medications such as pain relievers, menstrual relief tablets and weight-loss supplements may contain caffeine. Check the labels.

Alcohol

Check with your physician about drinking alcohol while you are breastfeeding. Alcohol could affect your letdown reflex. It may cause poor development and growth in newborns. Drinking beer does not increase milk supply.

Food allergies and sensitivities

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

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

If it seems that the foods you eat cause these problems, limit or do not eat them for 10 to 14 days. Then, begin adding them to your meals 1 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.

Talk with your care team

If you follow a special diet, have questions or have restrictions in your diet, please contact your physician, certified lactation consultant or registered dietitian for guidance.