






Healthy eating for Breastfeeding Mothers

Healthy eating is important when you are breastfeeding. Your body has a greater need for most nutrients. Some of the extra energy required for breastfeeding comes from body fat stored during pregnancy. To meet your extra nutrient needs, it is important to eat a variety of nutritious foods. Use the guide below to help you make the best choices when planning what you eat.

Food Group	Number of Serves	1 Serve
Bread and Cereals  Choose wholegrain/ wholemeal varieties	5-7	2 slices bread 1 medium bread roll 1 cup cooked rice, pasta 1 cup breakfast cereal, porridge ½ cup muesli
Fruit 	5	1 piece medium sized fruit 2 pieces smaller fruit 20 grapes or cherries ½ cup juice 1 cup diced/canned fruit 1 ½ tbsp sultanas
Vegetables 	7	1 medium potato ½ medium sweet potato 1 cup salad vegies ½ cup cooked vegetables ½ cup lentils, chick peas, canned beans
Meat, fish, poultry, nuts and legumes  2-3 Fish serves per week	2	65-100g cooked meat/chicken 80-120g cooked fish 2 small eggs 1/3 cup cooked dried beans, lentils, chick peas, split peas or baked beans 1/3 cup nuts
Dairy  Choose fat reduced varieties	3	1 cup milk 40g (2 slices) cheese 200g yoghurt 1 cup custard

This sample meal plan is an example of how to fit your nutrition needs (from the previous page) into a day's eating:

Breakfast

½ cup orange juice
2 slices of toasted multigrain/wholemeal bread
1 poached egg
Mushrooms & tomato

Morning tea

200g low fat yoghurt
½ cup fresh fruit

Lunch

Tuna & salad sandwich on multigrain roll
1 piece fresh fruit
1 glass low fat milk

Afternoon Tea

2 slices of cheese on wholemeal crackers

Dinner

Roast Lamb
Vegetables (2 cups)
plus 1 medium potato
1 cup fresh fruit salad & custard

Supper

Whole grain English muffin with banana & walnuts

Drink plenty of water during the day.

Vegetarian and Vegan mothers

Breastfeeding vegetarian and vegan mothers need to ensure they are getting all the necessary nutrients in their diet. If you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet we advise you to consult with your doctor to have your vitamin B12 and iron levels checked. A Dietitian will be able to help you make sure your diet meets your nutrition needs.

Iodine

Adequate iodine while breastfeeding is essential for your baby's growth and brain development. It is now recommended that all breastfeeding women should take a supplement containing 150 micrograms of iodine. You still need to consume good food sources of iodine in addition to this supplement. These food sources include:

- Seafood,
- Iodised salt (look for the green label),
- Bread with added iodine
- Eggs,
- Fortified margarine

Fluid

When you are breastfeeding you need more to drink to replace the fluid used in breast milk (~700mls/day). It is a good idea to have a drink, such as a glass of water or fat reduced milk (within your nutrition needs) every time your baby feeds. You will also need to drink more fluid at other times during the day too.

Caffeine

Caffeine passes into your breast milk, so try to limit caffeine-containing drinks such as tea, coffee, cola, cocoa and guarana energy drinks. Limit your total intake of these food and drinks to 2 to 4 each day.

Alcohol

Avoid alcohol in the first month after you have your baby, as alcohol passes into your breast milk very quickly (within half an hour) and stays in your body for 2 to 3 hours. Then, if you do drink, limit the amount (1 standard drink/day) and have it just after feeding. This will allow a lower alcohol level in your breast milk by the time of the next feed.

Avoiding certain foods during breastfeeding

Mothers may be told to avoid certain foods when breastfeeding. However, there is no evidence to support the claims that either colic or allergic reactions in infants are caused by the mother's diet. Allergic reactions are rare in breast fed babies. If this does occur, the mother's diet should only be modified in consultation with her doctor and Dietitian.

Constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Eat high fibre foods such as wholemeal/wholegrain breads and cereals, fruits, prunes, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Enjoy gentle exercise, such as walking.

Trying to lose weight while breastfeeding

Breast feeding helps you shape up.

The greatest amount of weight loss generally occurs in the first 3 months after birth and then continues at a slow and steady rate until 6 months after birth. Breastfeeding your baby should help you return to your pre-pregnancy weight, as some of the weight you gain during pregnancy is used as fuel to make breast milk. Continue breastfeeding for at least 12 months.

When you are trying to lose your pregnancy weight it is important you do not restrict your food intake too much. You still need to make nutritious breastmilk and stay healthy yourself. Try these helpful hints:

- Follow the meal plan in this handout
- Do not skip meals
- Limit foods high in fat and sugar such as lollies, chocolate, soft drinks, cakes, sweet biscuits, chips and fatty take-away
- Use healthy cooking methods such as steaming, boiling, microwaving, grilling and stir frying
- Trim fat from meats and avoid chicken skin
- Do some gentle exercise such as taking your baby for a walk
- Plan your healthy meals and snacks ahead of time

Are you losing weight too quickly?

If you are losing too much weight when you are breastfeeding it is important you do not stop breastfeeding.

Instead, find ways to eat more nutritious foods. Try these suggestions:

- Don't skip meals.
- Have three main meals and three between meal snacks.
- Keep easy to prepare nutritious snacks on hand e.g. crackers and cheese, fresh fruit, yoghurt, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, canned beans, flavoured milk, fruit smoothies, breakfast cereals and milk.
- Prepare a packed lunch or variety of snacks to have in a container beside you when breastfeeding.
- Prepare and freeze meals in advance when possible (or ask your friends/family to help).
- Plan your healthy meals & snacks ahead of time

References:

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3. Institute of Medicine (2009). Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Reexamining the Guidelines, National Academies Press.
4. Giglia R. Alcohol and lactation: a systematic review. *J Dietitians Association Of Australia* 2006; 63:103-116
5. National Health and Medical Research Council (2010), Public Statement, *Iodine Supplementation for pregnant and breastfeeding women*.