

What to Eat While You are Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding Benefits

- Breastmilk gives your baby all the vitamins and minerals he or she needs for the first 6 months. (Because vitamin D is triggered only by direct sunlight, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends giving your baby vitamin D supplements. Talk with your health care provider.)
- Breastmilk reduces your baby's risk of getting respiratory tract infections and risk of getting food allergies.
- Breastfeeding provides growth hormones for your baby, including those needed to fully develop the brain, breathing and digestion.
- Research suggests that breastfeeding may have a long-term positive effect on a baby's immune system. Any amount of breastmilk helps boost your baby's immune system.

What You Need to Eat Each Day While You are Breastfeeding

Eating well is important to help make sure that you and your baby get the right amount of energy and nutrition. You should continue to take your prenatal vitamins, unless your health care provider gives you other directions.

To keep making breastmilk, you need to add an extra 400 calories each day. (An example of 400 calories is a glass of milk, a meat sandwich and a piece of fruit.) The number of servings of each food group you need will depend on:

- your height, weight and age
- your physical activity level
- how long you are breastfeeding.

Talk with your health care provider about how much you will need to eat each day to support you and your growing baby.

Examples of One Serving

The following lists examples of one serving of each of the food groups.

Whole-grain breads, cereal, rice and pasta

- 1 slice of whole-grain bread
- 1 ounce whole-grain, ready-to-eat cereal (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-grain cooked cereal, rice or whole-grain pasta
- 1 whole-grain tortilla
- 4 to 6 whole-grain crackers

Vegetables

- 1 cup raw leafy vegetables
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup other vegetables (cooked or chopped raw)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vegetable juice

Good sources of vitamin A and potassium are spinach, carrots, sweet potatoes and squash. Good sources of vitamin C are oranges, tomatoes, kiwis, peppers and strawberries.

Fruits

- 1 piece of fruit (apple, banana, orange)
- 1 cup cut-up fresh fruit
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked or canned fruit
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit juice

Milk, yogurt and cheese

- 1 cup low-fat milk or yogurt
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce natural cheese (cheddar, Swiss, mozzarella, aged cheese)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cottage cheese
- 2 ounces processed cheese (American, cheese spread, cream cheese).

(over)

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts and seeds

- 2 to 3 ounces cooked lean meat, chicken or turkey, or fish (size of a deck of cards)
- ¼ cup cooked dry beans or one egg counts as 1 ounce of lean meat
- 1 tablespoons of peanut butter, or ½ ounce nuts or seeds count as 1 ounce of meat

Fats, oils and sweets

- 1 teaspoon butter or trans-fat free margarine
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 teaspoon sugar, jam or jelly
- 12 ounces soda, fruit beverage or beverages that contain sugar
- 1 ounce chocolate bar (“fun size”)
- 2 medium cookies
- ½ cup sherbet, gelatin dessert, ice cream or frozen yogurt

Weight Loss

For most, breastfeeding is an easy way to feed babies. It is also a way to help manage weight.

- It is common to feel thirsty while nursing. Drink enough liquids each day to quench your thirst and keep your urine pale yellow.
- Eat healthful, well-balanced meals. If you do not get enough calories and nutrients, you will become tired and will not be able to properly care for yourself and your baby.
- Lose weight gradually. A loss of no more than one-half to 1 pound a week is recommended. If you lose weight too quickly, it may mean you are cutting back on calories too much. Too few calories can cause your body to reduce the amount of breast milk you produce.
- Get regular exercise. It will help improve your muscle tone, lift your mood, manage your weight, and help prevent many health problems such as heart disease.

Special Food Plans

- If you follow a vegetarian food plan but still eat some animal products (meat, dairy), you are likely getting enough vitamin B-12.
- If you follow a strict vegetarian food plan without any animal products:
 - make sure you are eating other foods rich in vitamin B-12 such as fortified cold cereals, soymilk or veggie burgers
 - you will need to take a supplement each day that has calcium, zinc (12 mg), iron (9 mg) and B-12 (2.8 mcg).
You may also choose to get a vitamin B-12 shot instead of taking a supplement. Talk with your health care provider about which is best for you.
- If you do not drink milk or eat other dairy products, you will need to take a calcium supplement. While you are breastfeeding, you need 1,000 mg calcium each day.
- If you are younger than age 18, you have increased needs for:
 - calcium: 1,300 mg a day
 - zinc: 13 mg a day
 - iron: 10 mg a day.

Caffeine Use

Caffeine enters breastmilk. You should not drink more than 1 to 2 cups of beverages with caffeine each day. Your baby may become wakeful, hyperactive, fussy and colicky if you drink 6 or more servings.

Alcohol Use

Alcohol has been found in breastmilk. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, occasional or light drinking (no more than one drink each day) has not been found to be harmful to a nursing baby.

Drinking more than one drink a day can interfere with milk let-down and cause other side effects. Talk with your health care provider about the risks of drinking alcohol while breastfeeding.