

### What does it mean to eat healthy while Breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding is a time when many women may look more closely at their nutrition as they are also considering the health of their baby. The good news is that you do not need a special or complicated diet to breastfeed! Your body will do what it needs to do to make perfect milk for your baby. A poor diet is more likely to affect you than your breastfed baby.

When you are eating healthy you will feel better mentally, emotionally, and physically. This newsletter provides a general overview of considerations for your diet while breastfeeding that will help you feel your best. You will also find further information on reading labels as well as food intolerances and allergies.

Your daily caloric needs will vary depending on your lifestyle as well as whether you are eating for two or maybe three! In general, listen to your body and eat to appetite. Breastfeeding moms usually feel hungrier and need around 200 - 500 more calories a day than non-breastfeeding moms, but every woman is different. This usually equates to one or two healthy snacks in addition to your three meals per day.

The website [Choosemyplate.org](http://Choosemyplate.org) is a great resource for food choices for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.



### Can I diet while breastfeeding?

Many women find that they do lose weight while breastfeeding due to the increase in calories needed to make milk. Eating a healthy diet and adding moderate exercise when your doctor recommends may lead to a safe weight loss of about a pound a week. If you are losing weight more rapidly than 2 pounds a week or if your weight is creeping up, speak to your healthcare professional for more advice.

In general, if you are considering a diet, wait until your baby is at least 2 months old. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids and start the diet gradually. Keep an eye on your calories and avoid dropping below 1800 calories per day. A sudden drop in calories can reduce your milk supply.

It is not recommended you take on a ketogenic diet. Ketogenic diet is high-fat, adequate-protein and low carbohydrate diet that leads to nutritional ketosis and weight loss. Although safe in women who are not pregnant or breastfeeding, there are healthier ways to lose weight while nursing.

A healthy diet low in carbohydrates can be compatible with breastfeeding. A breastfeeding mother should continue to eat fruits and vegetables and a limited amount of whole grains. To lose weight, you can reduce high carbohydrate foods such as sugar, flour, breads, cakes, pasta, and junk foods.

Continuing to take supplements recommended by your doctor is also important to ensure necessary vitamins and minerals for you but should not be used to replace a healthy meal. Vitamin D is key as it is needed for healthy bones for you and your baby. We do get Vitamin D from sun exposure, but many doctors recommend vitamin D supplements for mother and infant also.

### How can I find time to prepare healthy food?



It is tempting to focus on feeding your baby rather than yourself, but you will feel better and have more energy if you are eating healthy foods.

Go for quick, nutritious meals such as scrambled eggs with spinach or have hard boiled eggs in the refrigerator ready to go. Consider a chicken stir fry with vegetables and brown rice. Possibly have oatmeal or yogurt in the morning with fresh fruit. Have chopped fruits and vegetables in the fridge ready for quick snacks. Or keep a bag of nuts next to the chair that you

breastfeed or pump in.

### Which Foods should I avoid while Breastfeeding?

The good news is, there are not any specific foods to avoid simply because you are breastfeeding. It is generally recommended that a nursing mother eat whatever she likes, whenever she likes unless baby has an obvious reaction to a particular food.

It is recommended that pregnant or nursing mothers avoid eating fish that are typically high in mercury such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. Click here for [fish high in mercury](#).

You can eat sushi if you are sure it is from a safe source. Reputable sushi bars are typically very careful.

Some food proteins do pass into mother's milk. Examples of this are cow's milk protein and peanut protein. So, you may wonder if you should avoid these foods. Unless you are allergic to peanuts yourself, there is no reason to avoid eating peanut based foods while breastfeeding. In fact, the latest research suggests that if you eat peanuts while breastfeeding and introduce them into your infant's diet within his first year, he is less likely to develop a sensitivity to them.

Another big question that many new moms have is "Should I eliminate dairy? I hear that babies have milk allergies because of dairy consumption?"

Dairy can be a difficult food to enjoy to the fullest due to developing lactose intolerance in adulthood. If dairy is causing uncomfortable symptoms in you, try a milk substitute for your calcium needs. 2-3 cups of almond, soy, oat or hemp milk will meet your calcium needs.

In terms of your baby, a recent study published in the journal JAMA Pediatrics found that around 1% of children have cow's milk allergy but up to 14% of families believe their child to have the condition. Development of symptoms usually occurs between 2 and 6 weeks of age. Consult with your doctor before deciding milk is the culprit. If your baby is allergic to dairy, it will be necessary to eliminate all sources of dairy proteins. Click here for a list of [hidden dairy](#).

Young babies are often fussy or gassy and new moms often wonder if this is from something they ate earlier in the day. Chances are it is not. As mentioned above, a small percentage of breastfed infants are allergic to something in their mother's breast milk.

If your baby is sensitive or allergic to a food, the most common culprits are cow's milk, egg, corn, soy, peanuts, and wheat, rather than spicy foods or "gassy" vegetables. Please refer to our [Settling Baby Newsletter](#) for further information.

Most breastfeeding mothers can drink **caffeine** in moderation. Infants who are particularly susceptible to caffeine's effects may experience fussiness or excessive wakefulness. Typically, 200 to 300 mg of caffeine (two mugs of coffee or four cups of tea are usually about 300 mg) per day is considered safe.

## Can I continue my vegetarian or vegan diet?

Vegetarian and vegan diets can work with breastfeeding if you are eating enough calories and you are getting all the nutrition your body needs with enough carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and especially protein. Be sure you are getting plenty of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, vitamin D, calcium, and omega 3 fatty acids in your food or supplements. Vegan mothers can get their calcium from bok choy, blackstrap molasses, tofu, collard greens, spinach, broccoli, almonds, and brazil nuts. Enriched orange juice, soymilk, almond milk, and calcium supplements can also help vegan mothers boost the amount of calcium in their diets to ensure a least 1000 mg per day. Consider talking with your healthcare professional to be sure you are getting all the nutrients you and your baby need.

## Are there foods that will help increase my milk production?

The main thing needed to maintain an ample milk supply is the removal of milk from your breasts. The more often and effectively your baby nurses or you remove milk from your breasts by pumping, the more milk you will have. Please refer to our [Increasing Milk Supply Handout](#) for further information.

Nutrients that are associated with good milk production are proteins, iron (anemia is a risk factor for low production), iodine (essential for proper thyroid function), B vitamins, calcium and zinc.

Choosing foods that are high in the above nutrients may help with milk production. Some examples are foods such as barley, quinoa, oats, sesame seed, tahini, lentils, fennel root, carrots, sweet potatoes, dark leafy greens, dates, figs, apricots, buckwheat, almonds, chickpeas, lentils, peas, kidney beans, black beans and white beans.

A good source of iron is foods like liver, beef, legumes, and spinach. Vitamin C can increase the absorption of iron, so add foods rich in vitamin C like lemon juice, bell peppers or strawberries to your meal.

Breastfeeding can make you feel thirsty, so remember to drink plenty of fluids. Everyone should be aiming for six to eight glasses of fluid a day and even more while breastfeeding. A good sign that you are getting enough to drink is that your urine is pale yellow, and your stools are soft. As a rule, sip a glass of water, milk, or unsweetened fruit juice each time you nurse.

## Can I drink alcohol while Breastfeeding?

Many breastfeeding moms choose to stop drinking alcohol while breastfeeding. However, occasional light drinking while breastfeeding has not been shown to have adverse effects on babies. By comparison, moderate amounts of alcohol consumed regularly over time by the mother may slow brain growth of her baby. Alcohol is best avoided until your baby is over

three months old and then enjoyed as an occasional treat such as a small (4 oz) glass of wine with dinner.

If you do have an alcoholic drink, make sure to allow at least two hours per drink for the alcohol to go through your system before your next breastfeed. If you are planning to need to feed your baby while you still have alcohol in your system, consider pumping beforehand and give that pumped milk to your baby during the time there is alcohol in your body. You could then pump in place of the feeding and discard that milk to maintain your milk production. Alcohol can temporarily decrease how much milk you make, so your baby may feed more often after this.

Please speak with your Lactation Consultant if you would like more resources and guidance on this subject.

## Digging Deeper into Food Selection

Fresh, unprocessed foods are the most nutritious and most desirable choices. This has become more difficult with industrialization that results in food being grown and processed in fewer locations and traveling farther to reach consumers. There is growing concern about genetically modified (engineered) food, irradiated food, environmental contaminants, bacteria outbreaks, and unhealthy practices in food processing.

To counteract these trends, many families are consuming produce from local farmers' markets, home gardens and sustainable farms. Many communities have food resources such as community gardens and low-income options with local food banks now making fresh produce available to families. When selecting food, consider avoiding or minimizing the amount of pesticides and heavy metals such as lead and mercury. See page 6 for more details on marketing terms.

Reading food labels can also assist in healthy food selection. Ingredients are listed in order of weight. Labels also should list additives such as sugar, salt, flavor, preservatives, and coloring. For example, reading a label on canned fruit may help you choose the fruit canned in juice rather than heavy syrup to decrease your sugar intake.

Food handling and preserving techniques can also alter the quality of food. Foods such as peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes are often waxed to preserve their freshness during transport and storage. Other foods such as oranges may be colored to enhance visual appeal. The methods used to treat foods often have benefits, so the produce is available year-round. By washing or peeling foods, this can reduce the pesticide residues on fruits and many vegetables.

## The Gift of Your Milk

You are providing your baby with the most perfect gift of your milk! Be kind to yourself and know that nature is very forgiving – mother's milk is designed to provide for and protect her baby even in hardship and famine.

Try to eat a variety of foods in their most natural state. A good rule of thumb is to shop on the outer edges of the grocery store finding fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, dairy products, whole grains etc.

Sound nutritional practices will continue to enhance the wellbeing of your entire family, long after pregnancy and breastfeeding. So, enjoy eating a variety of healthy foods in their most natural state!

### Additional information on reading labels

Common marketing terms such as "natural", "free-range", "grass-fed" are not regulated and can be used with loose interpretation. For example, when fruits and vegetables are grown conventionally, this means farmers utilize chemical fertilizers to enhance plant growth, this could include radiation or sewage sludge. With animals this includes antibiotic use and growth hormones.

Therefore, there has been a big push from the community for **organic foods**. If something is grown organically it means farmers grow food without the use of synthetic materials or genetically modified crops. If the meat is labeled organic it means the feed is free from animal byproducts and the land the animal is raised on is certified organic. This helps you determine whether the food has pesticides on it or not.

It all boils down to a chemical known as **Glyphosate**. It is the most commonly used pesticide on the planet. Only trace amounts are thought to be present in commonly consumed foods and beverages. However, researchers have found that women who eat conventional diets have higher levels of this herbicide in their breastmilk than women who eat organic. This can be concerning due to its link to autism, thyroid disruption, and suspected cause of preterm labor.

### Fruits and Vegetables where organic makes a difference

Dirty dozen and Clean 15 are referring to produces most contaminated (Dirty dozen) and least contaminated (Clean 15) by pesticides. These lists are created to help us determine which products we should strive to purchase organic and which ones can be purchased conventional. Click to see the [dirty dozen list](#).

We hope this information will inspire you to make the healthiest food choices for you and your family. Please feel free to reach out to your Lactation Consultant with any questions.

### Corporate Lactation Services

We are here to provide support you in meeting your breastfeeding goals.

My Corporate Lactation Services Lactation Consultant: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: 1.888.818.5663 X \_\_\_\_\_

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- <https://www.lllc.ca/thursday-tip-breastfeeding-vegan-diet>