



Good Nutrition *while breastfeeding*

There is strong evidence that breastfeeding provides significant health benefits for both mother and baby.

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WOMEN, YOUTH & CHILDREN COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

Breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 to 12 months and beyond.



Looking after yourself

Your lifestyle changes when you have a baby. It is important to look after yourself, eat well and do regular gentle exercise.

- Eat a variety of food from the five food groups
- Try and establish a routine of eating regular meals and snacks
- Drink plenty of water
- Have healthy snacks on hand e.g. fruit, nuts, reduced fat yoghurt, wholegrain crackers
- Limit high fat and high sugar foods such as chips, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks
- Try to take time out each day for a rest.



Some important nutrients

Your need for most vitamins and minerals is greater while you are breastfeeding. Look out for the following:

Iodine

Iodine is essential for hormone production and your baby's brain development.

Good sources of iodine include:

- Bread made with iodised salt
- Dairy foods
- Seafood
- Iodised salt.
- Eggs

Breastfeeding women cannot obtain adequate iodine from diet alone. It is recommended that all breastfeeding women take an iodine supplement of 150 micrograms daily. Ask your pharmacist if you need help choosing one.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles strong and healthy.

Good food sources of vitamin D include:

- Oily fish (e.g. sardines, herring, mackerel, tuna in oil)
- Margarines and milk enriched with vitamin D
- Eggs.

It is difficult to get enough vitamin D from diet alone.

The sun is the best natural source of vitamin D but it is also the major cause of skin cancer.

For women with dark skin or little exposure to sunlight, a vitamin D supplement and a diet high in vitamin D rich foods will help protect your bones and those of your baby.

If you think you could be at risk of vitamin D deficiency, talk to your doctor about supplementation.



Water

Drinking extra water helps to replace the fluid used for breast milk. You will need an extra 1-2 cups of fluid every day. This is a total of 7-9 cups of fluid each day. The best choice is tap water. Try to have a glass of tap water every time you feed your baby.





Gradual weight loss of up to ½ kilogram per week through healthy eating and physical activity is reasonable.

Getting back to my pre-pregnancy weight

Breastfeeding may assist with weight loss. The amount of weight loss is different for all mothers.

Some women find it difficult to get back to their pre-pregnancy weight. Here are some tips that may help:

- Continue to eat a wide variety of healthy foods from each food group
- Plan your meals and snacks in advance
- Try not to skip meals
- Avoid grazing
- Choose portion sizes to match your hunger
- Limit high fat and high sugar foods such as chips, biscuits, chocolate and soft drinks
- Use healthy cooking methods such as grilling, steaming and stir-frying
- Drink plenty of water
- Increase your activity levels if possible
- Try a food and mood diary for a few days to help you identify triggers for poor eating.

Some mothers find they lose weight too quickly after childbirth.

- Make the time to have 3 main meals and 3 snacks daily
- Keep a variety of healthy snacks at hand
- Include more milk or soy drinks
- Add extra heart healthy fats e.g. olive, canola and sunflower oils, avocado, peanut butter.

Make an appointment with a Community Dietitian for nutrition advice if you are concerned about your weight.



Alcohol

Alcohol passes into breast milk very quickly. The level of alcohol in your breast milk will be similar to the level of alcohol in your blood. **The safest option is to avoid drinking alcohol while breastfeeding.** This is particularly important in the first month after delivery while breastfeeding is being established.

If you choose to drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than 2 standard drinks on any one day. On average, it takes over 3 hours for alcohol to be cleared from breast milk after 2 standard drinks. Drink after a breastfeed or consider expressing breast milk before drinking.



Caffeine

A low to moderate intake of caffeine appears to be safe for breastfeeding mothers. Limit to 3 cups of coffee or 6 cups of tea (unless decaffeinated) per day. Caffeine may affect your breast milk let-down reflex and disrupt your baby's feeding and sleep routine. You can reduce the amount of caffeine that your baby is exposed to by having drinks that contain caffeine **after** breastfeeding.

Avoid drinks with added caffeine or guarana such as 'energy' drinks.



Fish and Mercury

Fish is an important source of Omega 3 Fats. Breastfeeding women can safely eat 2–3 servings of most types of fish each week. Some fish contain high levels of mercury and should be limited. If eating orange roughy or catfish limit to 1 serve per week and if eating flake, swordfish, broadbill or marlin limit to 1 serve per fortnight.



Vegetarian eating

A well planned vegetarian diet can meet the nutritional requirements for breastfeeding mothers. Try to include protein and iron rich food at each meal such as legumes, tofu, eggs, nuts and seeds. Vitamin B12 is essential for your baby's brain development. Aim for at least 4 serves of vitamin B12 rich food each day e.g. eggs, milk, cheese, yoghurt and vitamin B12 enriched vegetarian foods and soy drinks.

Constipation

Constipation can be a problem for new mothers. It can usually be managed with a combination of dietary changes, gentle exercise, good bowel habits and/or medication.

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Eat high fibre foods including wholegrain breads, high fibre breakfast cereals (e.g. Weetbix™, oats, muesli), brown rice and wholemeal pasta, vegetables, legumes (e.g. baked beans), fruit, prunes, nuts and seeds
- Do regular, gentle exercise such as walking

If you are concerned about constipation, talk to your Doctor, pharmacist or dietitian.

Food Allergies and Intolerances

There is no evidence that avoiding allergenic foods while breastfeeding will prevent or reduce the risk of your child developing allergies.

Where possible:

- Breastfeed your baby for at least 6 months and up to 2 years of age or beyond
- Introduce solids around 6 months of age and not before 4 months.

To make an appointment with a Community Dietitian phone Community Health Intake on 6207 9977.

Healthy Eating Meal Plan

Breakfast



3 SERVES
Breads
and cereals



1 SERVE
Dairy



1 SERVE
Fats and oils

Morning Tea



1 SERVE
Breads
and cereals



1½ SERVES
Vegetables



½ SERVE
Dairy

Lunch



2 SERVES
Breads
and cereals



½ SERVE
Protein



3 SERVES
Vegetables

Afternoon Tea



1 SERVE
Breads
and cereals



1 SERVE
Fruit



½ SERVE
Protein

Dinner



2 SERVES
Breads
and cereals



1½ SERVES
Protein



3 SERVES
Vegetables



1 SERVE
Fats and oils

Supper



1 SERVE
Fruit



1 SERVE
Dairy

Food Groups

Breads and Cereals

9 SERVES

Choose wholegrain and wholemeal varieties



- 1 slice bread
- ½ medium roll, flatbread
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles or quinoa
- 2/3 cup breakfast cereal
- ½ cup cooked porridge
- ¼ cup muesli
- 1 crumpet or English muffin
- 1 fruit bread
- 1 small scone
- 2 pikelets
- 3 crispbread

Vegetables

5½ – 7½ SERVES

Eat a variety of different coloured vegetables every day; raw or cooked, fresh, frozen or canned



- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- ½ cup cooked or canned beans, lentils or chickpeas
- 1 cup raw salad vegetables
- ½ small potato or sweet potato
- 1 medium tomato
- ½ cup corn or peas

Food Groups

Fruit

2 SERVES

Choose different coloured varieties of fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit



- 1 medium sized piece of fruit
e.g. apple, banana or orange
- 2 small pieces of fruit
e.g. apricots, kiwifruit or plums
- 1 cup grapes, berries or cherries
- 1 cup diced or canned fruit
- 1½ tablespoons sultanas
- 4 dried apricot halves
- ½ cup (125ml) fruit juice



Dairy and Alternatives

2½ – 4 SERVES

Choose reduced fat varieties as they are lower in energy and higher in calcium



- 1 cup (250ml) milk
- 1 cup calcium & B12 enriched soy drink
- 2 slices (40g) cheese
- ½ cup ricotta cheese
- 200g tub yoghurt
- 1 cup custard



Food Groups

Meat, Fish, Poultry, Nuts and Legumes

2½ SERVES



Trim fat and skin. Limit added oils



- 65g cooked beef, lamb or pork
- 80g cooked chicken or turkey
- 100g fish fillet or 1 small can
- 1 cup cooked or canned beans, lentils or chickpeas
- 2 large eggs
- 170g tofu
- 30g nuts or seeds
- 30g peanut butter, tahini or nut spread

Fats and Oils

2 SERVES



Mono and polyunsaturated fats are better choices e.g. olive, canola and sunflower oils



- 2 teaspoons (10g) margarine
- 1 teaspoon oil
- 10g nuts or nut butters



Healthy Meal Ideas

Try to keep meals simple. Where possible, prepare meals ahead of time and freeze any leftovers.



- Spaghetti bolognaisse made with lean mince, grated carrot and zucchini
- Stir fries with meat, chicken, fish or tofu, vegetables and rice or noodles
- Grilled meat or fish with steamed vegetables or salad and fresh bread
- Omelette or scrambled egg mixed with finely chopped vegetables
- Meat and vegetable casserole
- Risotto with chicken and vegetables – try pumpkin, mushrooms, broccoli, asparagus
- Homemade pita bread pizza topped with vegetables and reduced fat cheese
- Pasta with pesto and salad
- Hearty vegetable soup – include meat, chicken or legumes and serve with a crusty bread roll.





Healthy Snacks

It is important to eat small, healthy snacks between meals to maintain your energy levels.

- Reduced fat plain or fruit flavoured yoghurts
- Reduced fat milk and calcium fortified soy drinks
- Fruit smoothie made with milk, yoghurt and fresh or frozen fruit
- Fresh fruit, canned fruit or dried fruit
- Small handful of unsalted nuts
- Vegetable sticks with hummus, salsa or tzatziki dip
- Homemade popcorn
- Wholegrain crackers with cheese, vegemite, avocado or low fat dip
- Wholegrain breakfast cereal e.g. Weetbix™ or oats and milk
- Toasted sandwich with baked beans or cheese and tomato
- Toast with avocado, light cream cheese or peanut butter
- Toasted fruit bread muffins or crumpets.

Further reading

Physical Activity

www.physicalactivityaustralia.org.au/postnatal-exercises/

Water

www.nrv.gov.au/nutrients/water

Alcohol

www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/wwtk-cons-leaflet

Caffeine

www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/breastfeeding-and-maternal-caffeine-consumption

Fish and Mercury

www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/chemicals/mercury/documents/mif%20brochure.pdf

Allergy

www.allergy.org.au/

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

www.eatforhealth.gov.au



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Where can I find out more information?

HERE ARE 3 WAYS:

1. **TALK** to your doctor
2. **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** with an ACT Health Community Dietitian by phoning **6207 9977**
3. **CHECK OUT** more at www.health.act.gov.au/nutrition

