

Eating Well During Breastfeeding

What are the benefits of breastfeeding?

For your baby:

- Breast milk is the best food for your baby for the first 12 months.
- Breast milk builds your baby's immune system and protects against infections and allergies.
- Breast milk is easy to digest.
- Breast milk helps make jaws and teeth healthy.
- Breast milk may help your baby from becoming overweight later in life.

For the mother:

- Breastfeeding helps shrink your uterus to its pre-pregnancy size.
- Combined with a healthy diet, breastfeeding may help with weight loss.
- Breastfeeding saves time and effort. No bottles, mixing or heating is needed.
- Breast feeding is easier to do at night and when traveling.
- Breastfeeding saves money.
- Breastfeeding gives you special time to bond with your baby.

General guidelines

Successful breastfeeding does not depend on the size of your breasts. Your body will make plenty of milk for your baby. The more you breastfeed, the more milk you make.

- You can breastfeed even if your baby is premature, born by Caesarean (C-section), or if you have twins.
- Colostrum is the first liquid made by your breasts. It is a clear yellowish color. This liquid will change in a few days to thin, watery breast milk.
- Signs that your baby is full may include:
 - Falling asleep.
 - Closing or covering the mouth.
 - Letting the milk run out of the mouth.
 - Playing with your nipple instead of sucking.
 - Pulling or turning away.
- Your baby is getting enough milk if they gain weight and have six to eight wet diapers each day.
- Breast milk is the only food your baby needs for the first four to six months. Weaning your baby from breastfeeding should be done gradually over several weeks. As your baby begins to eat solid foods, breastfeeding will slow down.
- Talk to your doctor about vitamins for your baby. Your doctor may give your baby iron, fluoride or vitamin D.
- Support from a lactation consultant can be very helpful.

Healthy Eating

Good health and nutrition are very important while breastfeeding. Eating well and drinking plenty of liquids will make enough nutritious milk for your baby. Continue taking your prenatal vitamins.

Breastfeeding mothers need 500 extra calories each day to make milk. This is not a time to diet. The chart below will help you make nutritious meals and snacks. Please note that the recommended quantities from each food group apply to a 2,000-calorie diet. This information and other resources can be found at www.MyPyramid.gov.

Healthy Snacks

You may not have time to eat three meals a day. If not, try snacks or mini meals. They are a great way to add extra nutrition to your day. Keep some healthy snack foods handy. Below are some mini-meal snack ideas:

- Peanut butter sandwich.
- Apple with peanut butter.
- Popcorn.
- Pretzels.
- Crackers.
- Yogurt.
- Fresh or dried fruit.
- Vegetable juice.
- Baked potato.
- Cheese.
- Milkshake made with low-fat milk.

Fluids

It is important to drink at least 12-13 cups of liquid (96-104 ounces) each day. This helps you make enough milk for your baby. Drink liquids (water, milk, juice) with each feeding.

Irritating foods

Some foods that you eat may cause gas or bother your baby. Your baby may become fussy after you eat these foods:

- Beans.
- Chili.
- Chocolate.
- Tomatos.
- Caffeine.
- Spicy food.
- Broccoli.
- Onions.
- Cabbage.
- Garlic.
- Cauliflower.
- Cucumbers.

You do not have to avoid these foods unless they bother your baby. To be sure, do a test. Avoid one food at a time and see if your baby stops fussing.

Remember that what you eat and drink affects your milk and your baby. When breastfeeding, do not drink alcohol. Limit drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, cola with caffeine). Ask your healthcare provider about medicines, herbal supplements and over the counter products that are safe to use while breastfeeding.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.