



Nutrition for breastfeeding

Breast milk provides the ideal nutrition for infants, supporting their growth and immune system development. For breastfeeding mothers, maintaining a well-balanced diet is essential for supporting lactation and ensuring their own health and recovery. Breastfeeding offers numerous benefits for both the baby and the mother. It significantly reduces the risk of infections in infants by more than 70% and improves maternal health by lowering the risk of postpartum depression by up to 50%, and reducing the risk of certain cancers, such as ovarian cancer, by up to 30%.



Key Macronutrients:

- **Proteins:** Vital for tissue repair and growth. Include a variety of sources such as fish, meat, legumes, eggs, and dairy products.
- **Carbohydrates:** Choose complex carbs like whole grains, fruits, dried fruits, and starchy vegetables for sustained energy.
- **Fats:** Focus on healthy fats from fish, such as wild salmon, avocados, nuts, such as walnuts, and seeds, especially those high in DHA for your baby's brain development.



Key Micronutrients:

- **Iron:** Crucial for energy; opt for heme sources like organ and red meat and non-heme sources like lentils, complemented by vitamin C-rich foods for better absorption.
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** Important for bone health; include dairy products and leafy greens and spend some time in sunlight.
- **Folic Acid:** Supports cell growth and the development of your baby's nervous system. Good sources include leafy greens, beans, and seeds.



Hydration:

- Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water daily, as staying hydrated is essential for milk production. Breast milk is approximately 87% water. Coconut water, milk and oat milk support lactation. Bone broths, soups and curries support recovery. Teas, such as fennel, chamomile, rooibos and ginger can enhance milk production and reduce gas in babies.



Sample Daily Menus

Breakfast	Omelette with veggies, yogurt, whole grain toast	Breakfast	Blueberry overnight oats
Morning snack	Fruit smoothie	Morning snack	Yogurt with mango
Lunch	Veggie curry with rice	Lunch	Chicken soup with veggies
Afternoon Snack	Handful of dates	Afternoon Snack	Carrot sticks & hummus
Dinner	Baked wild salmon with quinoa, broccoli & peanut sauce	Dinner	Lamb chops, baked sweet potato, mixed salad
Evening Snack	Handful of walnuts	Evening Snack	Banana



Limit or Avoid

High Mercury Fish	Predator fish like shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and bigeye tuna have high mercury content which can impair neurological and motor development in babies.
Caffeine	Limit caffeine intake as it can pass into breast milk and may affect baby's mood and sleep.
Alcohol	Alcohol can pass into breast milk and may impair motor development and sleep patterns in babies.
Ultra-processed foods	Often high in unhealthy fats, additives and sugars, these foods are not beneficial for milk quality or the mother's health.
Some Herbs	Herbs like parsley, peppermint, and sage, may reduce milk supply.
Nicotine	Nicotine can reduce prolactin levels, the hormone responsible for milk production, potentially leading to decreased milk supply.

Foods that can cause discomfort in some babies, especially in the initial phases of breastfeeding, include onions, broccoli and cruciferous vegetables, dairy, peanuts, chocolate, and spicy foods. If you suspect any of these foods are causing discomfort in your baby, eliminate the suspected food from your diet for 2-3 weeks. After this period, gradually reintroduce the food to observe any potential reactions and help build up your baby's tolerance. If symptoms persist, consult a pediatrician or lactation consultant for further guidance.

Breastfeeding is rewarding, but it can be challenging. Do not hesitate to ask for support from family, healthcare provider, lactation consultant or La Leche League.

References:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Breastfeeding
- World Health Organization (WHO) - Breastfeeding
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) - Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk
- La Leche League International - Hydration and Breastfeeding
- La Leche League International - Food Sensitivities
- American Academy of Pediatrics - Food Allergies in Breastfed Babies
- American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology - Food Allergy and Breastfeeding

Disclaimer:

The information provided in this guide is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. Always consult with your healthcare provider or a qualified professional for specific advice related to your health and your baby's health.

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