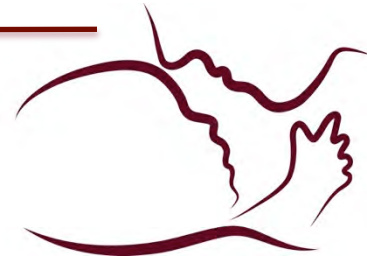


Nutrition for Nursing Mothers



Does the quality of breast milk depend on the mother's diet?

Studies have shown that mothers can produce good quality and enough breast milk to support the growth and health of the baby, even when the mother's supply of nutrients is limited. Breast milk production is not influenced by fluid intake. A mother's diet does have some influence on milk composition.

A mother who is not eating a healthy, well balanced diet may be short of nutrients herself and deplete her stores, effecting her own general well-being.

So, we could say that you don't need to doubt the quality of your milk. However, a healthy, well balanced diet is important to assure good recovery after the birth of the baby and enough energy to help you cope with the changes of life.

This picture "My Plate" shows what a complete and healthy diet consists of.

- ✓ Half of what you eat is fruit and vegetables
- ✓ The other half of your diet consists of grains and protein
- ✓ The cup next to the plate stands for "dairy"



Fruit and vegetables

Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. They provide vitamins and minerals, which will boost your resistance. It also contains fibres, which help with digestion and prevent constipation.

How much should you eat?

- ✓ Eat at least five portions per day (more than 400 grams).
For example two pieces of fruit and 300 grams of vegetables.
- ✓ What counts as one portion "fruit & vegetable"?

100 grams of vegetables or fruit OR 1 cup of green leafy vegetables
1 medium size of fruit (apple, pear, orange, kiwi) or 1 medium size tomato, 2 plums



Grains

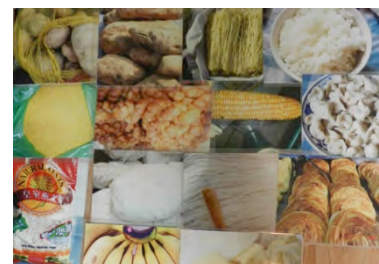
Grains are the starchy foods like rice, millet, flour, bread, potatoes, sweet potatoes, pasta, noodles, maize, oats, cereals, yams, cornmeal.

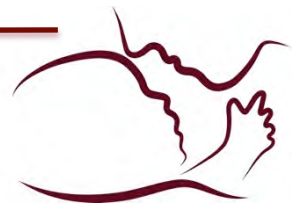
Grains give us energy, they're also a source of vitamins, calcium and iron. Whole grains contain fibres, which help with digestion and prevent constipation. Try to make at least half of your grains whole. Examples of whole grains include: whole-wheat flour, millet, brown rice, oatmeal, whole cornmeal.

How much should you eat?

- ✓ Eat 6-11 portions per day.
- ✓ What counts as one portion "grains"?

1 large slice of bread (30-40 g) or 1 medium potato, half a cup of cereal (rice, millet, oatmeal), 30 g ready to eat dry cereal, 3 small crackers.





Protein

Lean meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans and peas, nuts and seeds are “protein foods”. Meat is rich in iron, which can help to prevent anaemia.

How much should you eat?

- ✓ Eat two portions per day.
- ✓ What counts as one portion “protein”?

Two eggs or 150-200 g of cooked beans, 70-80 g of fish, lean meat or poultry.

Fish and shellfish are a great source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids (containing DHA). If a nursing mother eats more of these fatty acids, her milk will also contain more fatty acids. It is recommended that women who are breastfeeding eat fish at least twice per week (200-340 g).



Dairy

Dairy foods are one of the richest sources of calcium in your diet. Calcium is important for the development of bones and teeth. A lack of calcium in your diet won't affect the calcium in your milk, but might cause you to be short of calcium. Even with an adequate intake of calcium, there will be some bone loss during breastfeeding. However, 3-6 months after weaning there will be a reversal of bone loss. That is why the more babies and the longer you breastfeed, the smaller your risk of osteoporosis.

How much dairy should you consume?

- ✓ Three portions per day.
- ✓ What counts as one portion “dairy”?

200 ml yoghurt OR 300 ml milk OR 45 g hard cheese



Some things to keep in mind:

- *Drink plenty* (about 8 cups per day. Your urine should be light yellow). You can drink water, soup, milk products, juices, tea and coffee. Avoid drinking too much sugary drinks (like soda)
- *Moderate intake of caffeine* (three cups a day) is usually no problem. A breastfeeding mother who has too much caffeine may lead to the baby being wakeful and irritable and it may slow down the let-down reflex
- *Alcohol consumption*: Alcohol passes readily into breast milk. Excess levels of alcohol in breast milk may lead to the baby being drowsy, weak, and it can affect his growth. It takes about 2-3 hours for the alcohol in breast milk to clear. If you want to occasionally have an alcoholic drink, then it is best to have a small amount after breastfeeding your baby
- *Eating for two isn't necessary, but you might feel the need to eat a little more than usual*. Eat for example one or two slices of whole wheat bread, a piece of fruit, or a glass of milk extra per day
- *There is no need to avoid certain foods*. The chance that your baby has an adverse reaction to something that you have eaten is very small
- *Take a walk outside every day*. If you're not exposed to sunlight for at least half an hour every day, take 10 mg of vit. D/day (see also our handout “Do I Need to Take Calcium, Vit D, Folic Acid and Iron Supplements?”)
- *Smoking, mints, parsley, and sage* are known to reduce breast milk supply
- *Oatmeal, and herbs like alfalfa, blessed thistle, and fenugreek* can help to increase milk supply (see the handout “Increasing Breast Milk Supply”)

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this program.