

Eating Well when Breastfeeding

Eating well for you and your baby

Breastfeeding uses energy and nutrition, it is important to eat well for both you and your baby's health and wellbeing.

Eat a variety of healthy foods every day

Breast milk has lots of important nutrients that your baby needs to grow and develop.

Eat a variety of foods from each of the food groups every day to get the nutrients you and your baby need:

- vegetables - choose a mix of different kinds
- lean meats, chicken, fish and meat alternatives such as tofu, eggs and legumes
- grain foods like bread, pasta, and rice
- fruit - choose a variety of types
- milk, yoghurt, cheese or dairy alternatives like soy that are have added calcium.

Drink plenty of water

When you are breastfeeding, you need more fluid than usual. Drink a glass of water each time you feed to replace the fluid in breast milk.

Tip: Place a water bottle next to you when you sit down to breastfeed.

Iodine

Iodine is an essential nutrient that your growing baby needs for healthy growth and brain development.

You need more iodine than usual when pregnant and when breastfeeding, and it is very hard to get enough from food alone.

While you are breastfeeding, take an iodine supplement of 150 micrograms per day.

If you have coeliac disease, are lactose intolerant or have a thyroid condition, talk to your GP or pharmacist before taking an iodine supplement. You may need to take a different amount.

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is important for a baby's brain and nervous system.

Vitamin B12 is only found naturally in animal foods. If you do not eat animal foods (like meat, fish, eggs, milk and cheese) you may not have enough vitamin B12 stored for your growing baby.

If you are vegetarian or vegan, talk to your GP and ask to get your vitamin B12 levels checked. Ask if you need to take a vitamin B12 supplement.

Caffeine

Caffeine is a mild stimulant, found in coffee, tea, chocolate, energy and cola drinks.

Most people who breastfeed can have some caffeine with no effect on their baby. Limit to 200 milligrams (mg) from all food and drink sources of caffeine each day. This is about the same as:

- two cups of instant coffee **or** one espresso coffee **or** one coffee based cold milk drink **or**
- four cups of tea **or**
- two small cola drinks.

Energy drinks contain high amounts of caffeine and are not recommended while breastfeeding. If you are unsure about whether a product contains caffeine, or how much caffeine it contains, read the food label.

Some people find that if they drink too many caffeine containing drinks their baby is unsettled and irritable. If you find that your baby is unhappy or restless after you have had caffeine, think about having less or feeding your baby just before you have caffeine. Only a very small amount of the caffeine you drink will then get into breast milk at the next feed.

Alcohol

No amount of alcohol is safe while breastfeeding. If you choose to drink alcohol, there are risks to both you and your baby's health and development. The safest option is not to drink alcohol when breastfeeding.

For more information and support:

- Call the Breastfeeding Helpline on 1800 686 268 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Visit the Australian Breastfeeding Association website www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Want to know more

Ask your GP or child health nurse.