



## Nutrition & Breastfeeding Common Questions and Answers

### **Q: Will I have to change my diet while breastfeeding?**

**A:** Breastfeeding does not require a special diet or different foods. All women need to eat a healthy diet of a variety of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, low fat dairy and whole grains every day. The extra calories and nutrients you need are easy to get when you eat a healthy diet and you eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. You can make a food plan just for you at: [www.choosemyplate.gov/supertracker-tools/daily-food-plans/moms.html](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/supertracker-tools/daily-food-plans/moms.html)

### **Q: Can I go on a diet to lose weight while breastfeeding?**

**A:** It is not a good idea for breastfeeding women to lose weight quickly. Rapid changes in weight can affect the amount of milk you make. You will lose weight gradually as you make milk for your growing baby. It is best to make slow changes.

To lose weight safely and slowly limits extra fats and sugars and exercise most days. Skipping meals is not healthy for anyone and can reduce your baby's milk. The more often and longer you breastfeed the easier it is to lose weight.

### **Q: Can I eat "junk food" while breastfeeding?**

**A:** Eating "junk food," such as sodas, French fries, sweets and chips will not hurt your baby. Breast milk from mothers who eat "junk food" is better for babies than formula.

Eat healthy foods for yourself. You will lose extra weight faster and you will feel less tired

and get sick less often. To make healthier food choices, find out how much fat and sugar is in the foods that you eat. Get quick nutrition information at this web site: [www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/foodapedia.aspx](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/foodapedia.aspx)

### **Q: How much water do I need to drink?**

**A:** Many mothers find they get thirsty when they are breastfeeding, so have a glass of water nearby when you sit down to breastfeed. Let your thirst be your guide. Mothers who drink too much water can lower their milk supply.

### **Q: Do I need to drink milk or eat dairy foods to breastfeed?**

**A:** You do not need to drink milk or eat dairy foods to breastfeed. You do need foods that are high in calcium and Vitamin D in your diet while you are breastfeeding and all through your life. Dairy foods have a lot of calcium and so do many green leafy vegetables, calcium fortified soy products and canned sardines and salmon. If you do not eat calcium rich foods, ask your doctor about a calcium supplement.

### **Q: Can I have caffeine when I'm breastfeeding?**

**A:** Drinking no more than two to three 8-ounce cups of coffee early in the day should not affect your baby. If your baby isn't sleeping well or is fussy, cut back on caffeine in coffee, tea, soft drinks, and chocolate. Caffeine can keep you awake, too. Most coffee cups and coffee drinks are larger than 8-ounces (1 cup). Avoid energy drinks.



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### **Q: Is drinking alcohol a good idea when breastfeeding?**

**A:** Alcohol passes into breastmilk. An occasional glass of beer, wine, or other alcoholic beverage is not harmful to most nursing babies. But if you drink more frequently or in large amounts, it can be harmful for you and your baby.

If you do drink alcohol, stop after one drink, and wait at least 3 hours before breastfeeding your baby. One drink of alcohol is 1 beer, 1 ½ ounces alcohol, or 5 ounces wine. If you have one drink and your baby cannot wait 3 hours to feed, feed a bottle of warmed-up breastmilk from the freezer.

If you are not using birth control, do not drink alcohol. It can harm your next baby, even before you know you are pregnant.

### **Q: Can vegetarians or vegans breastfeed?**

**A:** Yes. You need protein, not animal products and meat to make breastmilk. Vegetarian and vegan women need to be sure to eat foods rich in vitamin B12, vitamin D, and calcium. Sometimes vegetarians need to take a vitamin, so talk to your doctor about taking one that meets your needs.

### **Q: Does my baby need Vitamin D if I breastfeed?**

**A:** Yes. Breastfed babies should begin taking 400 IU of Vitamin D soon after birth. Talk to your baby's doctor about Vitamin D for your baby as soon as possible. Most breastfed babies do not need any other vitamins.

### **Q: Do I need vitamins?**

**A:** Everyone who might get pregnant should take 400 mcg of folic acid each day by eating a cereal with 400 mcg or taking a folic acid vitamin. If you think you need other vitamins, talk to your doctor or to WIC staff. Even if you take a vitamin, try to eat different colors and textures of fresh and healthy foods each day.

### **Q: Can I exercise while breastfeeding my child?**

**A:** Yes. Exercising is part of being healthy. Exercise will not hurt your milk. Remember for your health and safety, start exercising gradually once your doctor says it's OK!