

HEALTHY MOTHERS ...

Eating nutritious and healthy foods is as important while breastfeeding as at any other time of life. Mothers are encouraged to take a simple, common sense approach to healthy eating at this time.

A nursing woman needs between 200 – 500 extra calories per day, depending on her activity level and general state of nourishment. Although a breastfeeding mother will use some of her fat stores, if she is active she may need more food. Extra nutrition can easily be obtained by eating a:

- Cheese or peanut butter sandwich
- Yogurt and a piece of fruit
- Glass of milk and a banana

Even if a mother is eating poorly she will produce the milk her baby needs. Her own general health and energy levels may be affected by reducing her nutritional stores.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.lalecheleaguecanada.ca
www.breastfeeding.com
<http://users.erols.com/cindyrrn/newman.htm>

Nutrition for the Nursing Mother

Healthy foods in moderation is a good motto for breastfeeding mothers. Interestingly, a diversity of foods gives baby a wealth of flavours to enjoy. When baby starts eating table foods at six months, the transition will be much easier for the baby who enjoys a bit of garlic now and again. The occasional chocolate or cup of tea/coffee, or a glass of wine will not affect most babies.

Fluids should be taken according to the mother's thirst (nursing mothers are generally more thirsty). Fluid intake should not be forced as this is not beneficial and does not affect milk supply.

- Drink to thirst.

Vitamin supplements are not routinely necessary for well-nourished breastfeeding mothers. Additional vitamin B12 supplements may be beneficial for women who are vegetarians. Vitamin D is best obtained by exposure of mother and baby to sunlight for a short time several times a week. Mothers who stay indoors or wear clothing that limits exposure to the sun, may need vitamin D supplementation.

Returning To Pre-Pregnancy Weight

Breastfeeding uses up energy stored during pregnancy. Research has shown that longer breastfeeding – six months and beyond - leads to a gradual return to pre-pregnancy weight.

During the first few months post partum, the mother's body is establishing a good milk supply and recovering from childbirth. During this time crash diets and quick weight loss measures should be avoided.

Gradual return to pre-pregnancy weight occurs if mothers eat to satisfy their hunger and choose nutritious whole foods. Moderate exercise is recommended and benefits the mother's well being generally.

“Women who breastfeed more frequently tend to lose weight more rapidly than women who breastfeed less frequently”.

“Breastfeeding mothers tend to lose more weight in the first six months postpartum than bottle feeding mothers”.

Breastfeeding and Human Lactation. Riordan and Aurbach: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, London.1997

Breastfeeding Myths

by Dr. Jack Newman

- **A breastfeeding mother has to be obsessive about what she eats.**

Not true! A breastfeeding mother should try to eat a balanced diet, but neither needs to eat any special foods nor avoid certain foods. A breastfeeding mother does not need to drink milk in order to make milk. A breastfeeding mother does not need to avoid spicy foods, garlic, cabbage or alcohol. A breastfeeding mother should eat a normal healthful diet. Although there are situations when something the mother eats may affect the baby, this is unusual. Most commonly, "colic", "gassiness" and crying can be improved by changing breastfeeding techniques, rather than changing the mother's diet.

- **A breastfeeding mother has to eat more in order to make enough milk.**

Not true! Women on even very low calorie diets usually make enough milk, at least until the mother's calorie intake becomes critically low for a prolonged period of time. Generally, the baby will get what he needs. Some women worry that if they eat poorly for a few days this also will affect their milk. There is no need for concern. Such variations will not affect milk supply or quality. It is commonly said that women need to eat 500 extra calories a day in order to breastfeed. This is not true. Some women do eat more when they breastfeed, but others do not, and some even eat less, without any harm done to the mother or baby or the milk supply. The mother should eat a balanced diet dictated by her appetite. Rules about eating just make breastfeeding unnecessarily complicated.

- **A breastfeeding mother has to drink lots of fluids.**

Not true! The mother should drink according to her thirst. Some mothers feel they are thirsty all the time, but many others do not drink more than usual. The mother's body knows if she needs more fluids, and tells her by making her feel thirsty. Do not believe that you have to drink at least a certain number of glasses a day. Rules about drinking just make breastfeeding unnecessarily complicated.

- **A mother should not drink alcohol while breastfeeding.**

Not true! Reasonable alcohol intake should not be discouraged at all. As is the case with most drugs, very little alcohol comes out in the milk. The mother can take some alcohol and continue breastfeeding as she normally does. Prohibiting alcohol is another way we make life unnecessarily restrictive for nursing mothers.

- **After exercise a mother should not breastfeed.**

Not true! There is absolutely no reason why a mother would not be able to breastfeed after exercising. The study that purported to show that babies were fussy feeding after mother exercising was poorly done and contradicts the everyday experience of millions of mothers. Recent studies show that there is no difference in the acceptance of breastmilk after moderate or even high intensity exercise.

For more information: <http://users.erols.com/cindyrn/newman.htm>

