



Nutrition Needs for Moms When Breastfeeding – Guidelines for Child Care Providers

Healthy eating is important for everyone. As a child care provider, many mothers may ask you what you think they should eat while they are breastfeeding their infants. Below are some tips that can help you provide the best information to a breastfeeding mother. A Registered Dietitian, someone who is an expert in nutrition, can also help to provide nutrition information for the mother and infant during breastfeeding. **It is important to know that a mother will make breastmilk no matter what she eats.**

1. Drink, Drink, Drink...Water that Is!

For most women, this is not a problem, as breastfeeding often makes many mothers thirsty. It is important to drink at least 8 glasses (8 ounces each) of fluids every day.

2. Eating Well

Breastfeeding mothers need an extra 500 calories per day to meet the needs of breastfeeding. This equates to roughly a container of yogurt and 4 graham crackers, so not much. Some new mothers may experience a decrease in appetite after delivery, so eating smaller meals throughout the day might be a good option. Adding servings of fruits, vegetables and whole grains are good options to add 500 calories per day as well.

3. Avoid Fad Diets

Now is not the time for quick weight loss diets. When breastfeeding, most women will lose around one pound every two to three weeks, but everyone is different.

4. Vegetarians

Mothers who are vegetarians can eat a diet to support their nutrition needs while breastfeeding. B₁₂ is often deficient in women who are vegan, so it would be important for women who do not eat eggs, milk and meat (including fish) to take a vitamin B₁₂ supplement.

5. **No Bones About It**

A woman who is breastfeeding should consume adequate amounts of calcium in their diets. Some choices include milk, yogurt, cheese and broccoli. Calcium fortified foods like orange juice are also good ideas. If needed, a calcium supplement, such as calcium carbonate, can be taken.

6. **Supplements**

It is often recommended to continue taking a prenatal vitamin while breastfeeding. Mothers should check with a health professional if she has questions.

7. **Foods and Other Things to Avoid**

There are no foods that should always be avoided by breastfeeding mothers, but once in a while some infants will be affected by something their mother has eaten. If the infant has any unusual symptoms like vomiting, refusing to eat, diarrhea/green stools or gassiness, it would be important to discuss these symptoms with a health professional.

Caffeine – Some breastfeeding mothers have found that if she drinks **a lot** of caffeinated coffee, tea or soft drinks, an infant may fuss and not sleep. If this happens, it is recommended that the mother cut back on the amount of caffeinated beverages she drinks per day.

Alcohol – It is best to refrain from drinking alcohol when breastfeeding. If a breastfeeding mother would like to have a single drink for a special occasion, it has been decided by health professionals that a single drink (e.g. 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, 1.5 ounces of hard liquor) is allowable when breastfeeding. **Alcohol does pass through breastmilk to the infant so less is best.** If alcohol is consumed, it is recommended to wait for 2 hours after consuming alcohol before breastfeeding. The mother should pump during the 2 hours and discard this milk. During the 2 hour period, the mother should use expressed milk from an earlier time to feed her infant.

Smoking – Smoke carcinogens do enter into breastmilk. For this reason, it is highly recommended that **breastfeeding mothers do not smoke.** If a mother does smoke, it is recommended to breastfeed before smoking, limit the amount that she currently smokes and do not smoke around her infant.

Medicine – Some drugs will go into the breastmilk, but many are safe. Encourage breastfeeding mothers to discuss medications including prescription and over-the-counter with a health professional and/or lactation consultant. They can help mothers with alternative medications if needed.