

Your Diet and Exercise While Breastfeeding



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

While you are breastfeeding, you will need to consume 300 to 500 calories a day more than your normal diet. If you nurse more than one baby, you will need even more calories. The best guide for the amount of food and fluids is your thirst and appetite.

Foods

Eat a Variety

- Eat a variety of nutritious foods with proteins, dairy, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- As you eat various types of foods, your baby will benefit as well. By getting this variety in your breast milk, it may be easier to give your baby new flavors when solid foods are introduced after six months of age.



Prenatal vitamins

- Keep taking your prenatal vitamins while breastfeeding.
- Take them with juice, milk, or water. You may also take them with a meal or snack.

Fluids

- Drink about 8 cups of water, milk, juice, or other fluids during the day.
- Drink dairy products, if you can, to help to boost your calcium levels.
- Limit caffeine, such as regular coffee, tea and cola, to no more than 1 to 2 cups a day. Caffeine may make your baby irritable and not able to sleep well.



Allergies

- If you have a family history of allergies, your baby can benefit a lot from your breast milk. Your milk is the least allergenic, meaning something that causes an allergy.
- Questions and concerns about allergies should be directed to your baby's doctor or the lactation consultant.



Exercise

- Exercise is a healthy part of life and not harmful when breastfeeding.
- You will feel more comfortable if you wear a support bra and exercise after emptying your breasts.

Losing weight

- Many women who breastfed their babies said it helped them get back to their pre-pregnancy weight more quickly, but this is not the case for all women. Some women do not lose weight while breastfeeding.
- Avoid dieting to lose weight quickly. Losing 2 to 4 pounds per month should not affect your milk supply. Losing more than 4 to 5 pounds a month (after the first month) is not advised for breastfeeding women.
- Tips for weight loss:
 - Limit sweets and high fat foods, such as soda pop, candy, chips, and cake. High calorie foods will fill you up without providing your body with necessary vitamins and minerals.
 - Limit butter, margarine, sour cream, mayonnaise, and salad dressing. Try reduced calorie varieties.

- If you are concerned about your weight at 6 to 8 weeks after delivery, talk with your doctor or a dietitian about your diet.

Alcohol use

- You should avoid alcohol in large amounts. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a drink now and then is fine, and recommends waiting two or more hours before nursing.
- You also can pump milk before you drink to feed your baby later.
- There is no need to “pump and dump” your milk after drinking. Alcohol leaves the milk as it leaves the blood. When your blood alcohol levels are back down, so are your milk alcohol levels.

Over the counter medicines

- Before taking any over the counter medicines, ask your doctor if it is safe while breastfeeding. There are very few medicines that need to be avoided.
- Some medicines can affect your milk supply, such as antihistamines, decongestants, and some forms of birth control.
- You can call the lactation consultants at Ohio State’s Wexner Medical Center for information about a particular drug and how it reacts with breastfeeding.

