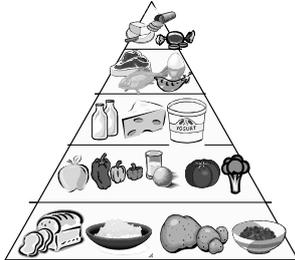


Healthy Eating When Breastfeeding

What do I need to eat when I am breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding is a normal process and special diets or special foods are not needed. A poor diet does not mean you will have poor milk.



Mothering is hard work. All mothers who are caring for young children need to eat well to take care of themselves. Aim to eat a variety of foods, choosing foods from the Food Pyramid's lower shelves.

Do foods I eat affect my baby?

Breast milk changes taste depending on what the mother eats. This helps the baby get to know the foods in the family's meals. Most babies do not react to foods that the mother eats. If you think a food is affecting your baby, avoid that food for a week, then eat it again and see if it makes a difference. If you are avoiding a major food group such as milk products, wheat or fruit and vegetables, discuss this with a dietitian so these foods can be substituted.



What about losing weight while I am breastfeeding?

Healthy food choices and increased physical activity can help you to lose weight. Weight loss should be slow and steady—about one pound a week (0.5kg). Very rapid weight loss (more than 7 pounds/3 kg per week) can make you feel tired and puts a stress on your body. If you are losing weight too fast or too much, eat more food from the lower shelves of the Food Pyramid—perhaps as small frequent meals rather than just one large meal.

How much fluid should I drink?

Drinking *more* fluid does not make more milk unless you are very dehydrated for a day or more. Drinking *less* fluid does not reduce over-fullness in your breasts. A glass of water or pure fruit juice next to you makes it easy to have a drink. If your urine is infrequent or if you often feel thirsty, you need to drink more fluid. Water, diluted pure fruit juice, fruit teas, milk and soups, all provide fluid. You do not need to drink milk to make milk.



What about caffeine?

Generally, up to 5 cups (not mugs) a day of tea/coffee/chocolate/cola/sports drinks that contain caffeine, does not affect the baby. High intakes of caffeine may cause some babies to be wakeful and restless.

How do I find time to eat?

Life with a new baby can be very busy. It may help if there is some food prepared in the fridge - for example a plate of sandwiches, casserole that can be re-heated, yoghurt and fruit. If someone asks what they can do to help you, suggest they fix a meal for you. Missing a meal does not affect your milk supply but it may make it more difficult to cope in general. Even if you are tired, take some time to eat as it will help you to feel better.



If you are worried about what you are eating or not eating, ask your doctor, midwife, practice nurse or public health nurse to refer you to a dietitian in the hospital or community services.