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Introduction

There is never a better time to start improving your eating habits than when you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding. Good nutrition is important for your baby, even before conception.

Being healthy before pregnancy

How important is what I eat?

Aim to lead a healthy lifestyle before becoming pregnant. This includes being active and working towards a healthy weight.

It is important you have a healthy, nutritious diet before becoming pregnant so your nutrient stores are 'topped up'. You should try to include a wide variety of food from each of the food groups daily.

Why is folate needed before pregnancy?

Folate is one of the vitamins needed by everyone for good health. It is found in most plant foods especially green vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, dried beans and nuts. Some foods such as breakfast cereals also have folate added to them.



It has been shown that extra folate in the very early stages of pregnancy can reduce the chance of having a baby with a neural tube defect. Spina bifida is the most common neural tube defect. This defect occurs when the spinal cord and brain are forming. This can happen before you know you are pregnant.

Even if you eat well it is difficult to get enough extra folate. So although it is worthwhile increasing the folate in your diet, it is also a good idea to 'top up' with a folate tablet. You can do this by taking a 0.5 milligrams (mg) folate (folic acid) tablet, **for at least ONE MONTH BEFORE pregnancy and the FIRST THREE MONTHS of pregnancy**. Folate tablets are not expensive and are available from your local pharmacy without a prescription.

Some women may be at a higher risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect and will be recommended a higher dose of folate. Check with your doctor if you are uncertain.

Healthy eating during pregnancy

How much food do I need to eat?

When you are pregnant you **do not** need to 'eat for two'! The quality of your diet is much more important than the quantity of food that you eat. In fact, when you are pregnant your need for energy (calories/kilojoules) is only slightly higher than normal. Calcium, iron, protein and folate are nutrients which are extra important during pregnancy.

Which foods do I need to eat?

It is important for women who are pregnant to eat a balanced diet. This will help your baby to grow strong and healthy. When pregnant you need to meet your own nutritional needs and also those of your baby.

You can use The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating to help you understand what foods you need. As shown in the diagram, foods are divided into five groups:

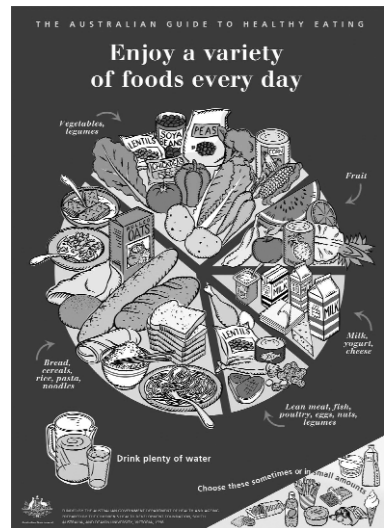
1. Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles
2. Vegetables, legumes
3. Fruit
4. Milk, yoghurt, cheese
5. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes

Each group provides different nutrients. Try to choose a variety of foods from each of the food groups.

Some foods do not fit into the five food groups. These are not essential for your body. These 'extra' foods, pictured outside the five food groups should be chosen only sometimes and in small amounts.

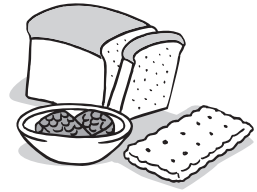
As a general rule:

- Base your diet around breads and cereals, vegetables and fruit.
- Include moderate amounts of animal foods (milk, yoghurt, meat, fish, poultry, eggs).
- Variety is vital!
 - Within each group, different foods provide more of some nutrients than others. Eat a variety of foods from within each group.
- Extra foods, choose these sometimes and in small amounts.
- Drink plenty of water.



Bread, cereal, rice, pasta and noodles

This group provides carbohydrates, protein, fibre and lots of vitamins and minerals. Wholemeal or wholegrain types provide more fibre. If you are feeling hungry eat more of these foods as a healthy way to feel fuller.

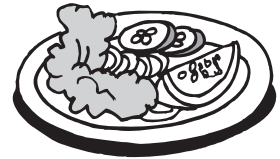


Hints:

- Eat different types of breads eg. brown, mixed grain, fruit, rye or flat breads.
- Eat different types of grains eg. add pearl barley to soups, try white or brown rice, pasta, Asian noodles, rice, couscous or polenta.
- Try different cereals eg. ready to eat breakfast cereals with different grains 'whole wheat breakfast biscuits', natural muesli, bran flakes or porridge.
- Limit the amount of high fat spreads and toppings/sauces you use on bread and pasta dishes.

Vegetables, legumes

These are a good source of vitamins (eg. folate) and minerals, as well as fibre and carbohydrate. Have lots of these! Try lots of different coloured vegetables (ie. orange, dark green leafy) as they provide different vitamins.



Hints:

- Enjoy raw salad vegetables such as lettuce, tomato, cucumber and capsicum.
- Try adding legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils and chick peas) to soups or casserole dishes.
- Frozen or canned vegetables can be used instead of fresh vegetables.
- Vegetable based soups make a healthy and easy meal.

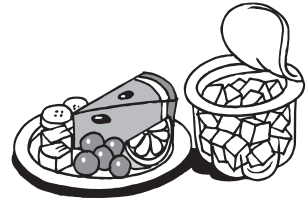
FOLATE helps prevent neural tube defects and is also important later in pregnancy as it helps to make red blood cells for both you and your baby. Breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables provide good sources of folate.

Try these folate rich foods:

- Green leafy vegetables, dried beans (eg. kidney beans), some fruit (eg. oranges, bananas), wholegrain cereals and nuts.
- Breakfast cereal with folate added.

Fruit

Fruit is a good source of vitamins, including folate and vitamin C. It also provides carbohydrate (natural sugars) and fibre. We are lucky to have lots of fresh fruit available in Australia. Fruit makes a great snack food. Tinned fruit (in natural juice) is also quick and easy.



Hints:

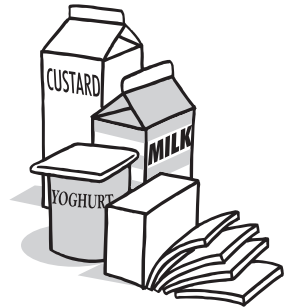
- Buy fruit that is in season as it will be cheaper.
- Eat some citrus fruit (oranges, mandarins) as they are high in vitamin C.
- Dried fruits (dried apricots, dried pears, sultanas) are a healthy snack.
- Fruit juice also belongs in this group but it is better to have fresh fruit because it contains more fibre, limit juice to one small glass each day.

Milk, yoghurt, cheese

Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt and cheese are excellent sources of calcium. They also contain protein, riboflavin and vitamin B12.

CALCIUM is needed during pregnancy to help your baby build strong, healthy bones and teeth. It also helps to keep your bones strong.

You should aim to include 3-4 serves of dairy foods each day. This is even more important if you are under 18 years of age as your bones are still strengthening, aim to include at least 4 serves daily.



One serve equals:

- 40 grams cheese
- 250 ml milk
- 250 ml calcium fortified soy milk eg. So Good™
- 200 gram tub yoghurt
- 100 gram canned sardines/salmon with bones
- 1 kg broccoli

Hints:

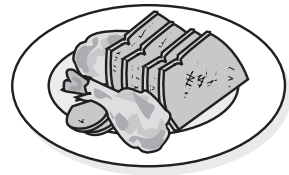
- Choose low fat milk (eg skim milk such as Tone™ or UHT skim, reduced fat such as Take Care™ or Light Start™)
- Choose low fat yoghurts (eg natural yoghurt, Yoplait Light™, Ski D'Lite™)

- High calcium milks may be useful if your dairy intake is low (eg. Pura Boost™).
- If using soy milk, make sure it has calcium added by looking for calcium in the ingredient list (eg So Good™, Australia’s Own Natural Soy Milk™).
- If you don’t like drinking plain milk try using milk on breakfast cereals, in mornays, custards and other milk based desserts or try adding cheese to your food such as omelettes, pasta or vegetable dishes.
- Flavour milk with products such as Milo™, Actavite™.
- Try eating yoghurt or cheese for a snack or for dessert.
- Fish with edible bones (sardines or salmon), green vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, nuts and seeds also contain calcium.

If it is difficult for you to get enough calcium from your diet you may need to take a calcium supplement. Discuss this with your doctor, midwife or dietitian.

Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes

The foods in this group are a good source of iron, protein, niacin and vitamin B12. Red meat is the best source of iron.



Hints:

- Try different meats and fish including beef, lamb, pork, kangaroo, chicken, turkey, duck, rabbit, fish and shellfish.
- Include red meat 3–4 times a week.
- Canned fish can be used instead of fresh fish.
- Choose lean meats (eg. trimmed meat, lean mince) and cook without adding lots of fat (eg. oils, butter, margarine).

... a little more about iron

Extra **IRON** is needed when you are pregnant. Iron is needed for making blood and carrying oxygen around the body. During pregnancy you have more blood in your body for you and the baby, so you need more iron. If you don’t eat enough iron in your diet you may become anaemic. This may make you feel very tired and worn out.

- The best source of iron in the diet is lean red meat followed by pork, poultry and fish.
- The iron in animal foods (meat, chicken, and fish) is more easily absorbed by your body than iron in plant foods.
- Plant sources of iron include wholemeal and wholegrain bread and cereals, beans and green leafy vegetables.

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- Eating foods high in vitamin C (eg. oranges, rockmelon, tomatoes, capsicum) will help your body to absorb more iron from plant foods (eg. a glass of orange juice with wholegrain breakfast cereal or tomato with a wholemeal sandwich).

Sometimes women who are pregnant will need to take an iron supplement to keep their blood iron levels up. Supplements are also worthwhile if you cannot eat enough high iron foods in your diet. Discuss this with your doctor, midwife or dietitian.

A little extra **PROTEIN** is needed particularly in the second half of pregnancy. Most of us eat more protein than we need. A small to medium serve of protein at lunch and dinner every day will easily meet your needs.

- Good sources of protein include; lean meat, fish, chicken, eggs, cheese, legumes (e.g. baked beans, lentils) and nuts.
- Use low fat cooking methods such as grilling, braising (e.g. casseroles) and microwaving.

What should I eat for the day?

This meal plan provides some ideas to help you include foods from each of the five food groups. The quantities you eat depends on your appetite and exercise level. Enjoy water throughout the day.

BREAKFAST:

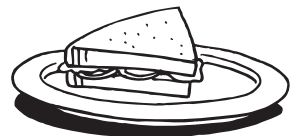
Wholegrain cereal with low fat milk eg. Weet-Bix™, Sultana Bran™ and/or toast with thin spread of margarine + topping.

Fresh fruit or tinned fruit in natural juice or Fruit juice (no added sugar).



LUNCH:

Sandwich/roll (wholegrain or wholemeal is best) with freshly cooked meat/cheese/egg/tinned salmon and salad. Fresh or dried fruit. Low fat yoghurt/fromage frais or a milk drink (eg. flavoured milk, fruit smoothie)



DINNER:

Lean meat/fish/chicken or bean dish with potato/pasta/rice/couscous.
 or pasta with bolognaise or vegetable sauce
 or home made pizza using pitta bread, fresh vegetables and grated cheese.
 Salad or vegetables.



SNACKS BETWEEN MEALS:

Low fat milk drinks (eg berries or tinned fruit blended with low fat milk).

Custard or low fat yoghurt.

Fruit (fresh, dried, tinned).

Vegetables (fresh salad vegetables such as carrot and celery sticks, snow peas and capsicum with a low fat dip (eg Tzatziki, Hommous).

Wholegrain biscuits (eg Vitawheat™, wholemeal Salada™) with low fat cheese or dip.

Nuts.

Remember, regular meals are an important part of a healthy diet.

Try not to skip meals.



Common questions during pregnancy

How much weight should I gain?

It may be harder to conceive if you are very under weight or overweight. If this is a problem discuss it with your doctor, midwife or dietitian.

If you are overweight, pregnancy is not a safe time for trying to lose weight. It is best to tackle this either before the pregnancy or as a long term goal after your baby is born.

Weight gain is a normal part of a healthy pregnancy. How much weight you gain depends on several things, including your pre-pregnancy weight. Most women can expect to gain between 11.5 -16 kg. Those who start under-weight may gain more, those over-weight may gain less.

The following table shows your ideal weight gain. Little or no weight is put on in the first trimester.

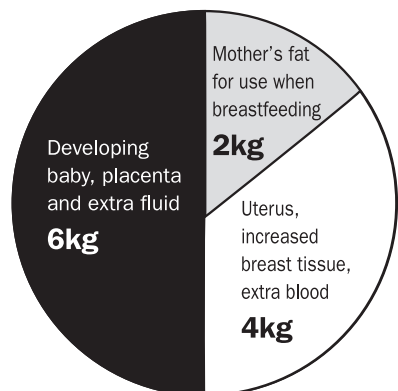
Pre pregnancy weight category	Ideal weight gain during pregnancy (kg)	*Recommended rate of gain (kg/wk)
Underweight	13 - 18 kg	0.5
Healthy weight	11.5 - 16 kg	0.4
Overweight	7 - 11.5 kg	0.3
Obese	7 kg	
Twin Pregnancy#	16 - 20 kg	

** 2nd and 3rd trimesters*

Talk to your doctor, midwife or dietitian if you are overweight or obese.

The weight you gain is made up of extra body tissue, placenta, fluid and blood as well as your developing baby. Remember that weight gain is part of a healthy pregnancy so take care not to overly restrict it.

If your weight gain is in the healthy range you can expect to return to your pre-pregnancy weight after your baby is born. Breastfeeding is a great way of helping this happen. You will use up more energy breastfeeding than at any time during your pregnancy.



What foods should I avoid?

Listeriosis is a **rare** but serious illness caused by a germ called Listeria which can be passed on by contaminated food or poor food hygiene. It causes few or no symptoms in healthy people but if it happens in pregnancy there is a risk that it may be transferred to your baby. Symptoms can be mild in pregnancy however the infection may lead to miscarriage, still birth, premature birth or may make a newborn baby very ill.

If you have any concerns about symptoms or illness please consult your Doctor.

You can reduce the risk of listeriosis by taking simple food hygiene steps at home, avoiding certain high risk foods and being careful about food prepared by others.

Avoid high risk foods, these are mostly chilled, ready to eat foods and include:

Food Type	Examples
Cold meats	Sliced processed meats (eg ham, salamis), a better cold meat alternative is home cooked meat stored in the fridge and eaten within a day of cooking.
Cold cooked chicken	Take away cooked diced chicken (as used in chicken sandwiches).
Pate	Refrigerated pate or meat spreads.
Salads (fruit & vegetables)	Avoid pre-prepared salads and/or ready-to-eat food from supermarkets, smorgasboards, delicatessens and sandwich bars.
Chilled Seafood	Raw seafood such as oysters and sashimi. Smoked seafood such as smoked salmon, smoked oysters (canned are safe).
Cheese	Soft cheese such as Brie, Camembert and Ricotta (but they are safe if cooked and served hot). There is no need to avoid hard cheeses, cream cheese, cottage cheese, or yoghurt but still check that they are fresh and packaging is intact.
Ice cream	Soft serve
Other dairy products	Unpasteurised milk or food made from unpasteurised milk.

Take some simple food hygiene steps to reduce the risk of listeriosis.

- Make sure ready to eat hot food is served steaming hot.
- Eat only freshly cooked food however if leftovers are stored promptly they can be eaten within a day. Cover and cool food in the fridge, not on the bench top.
- When you reheat food, make sure it is steaming hot throughout.
- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources (eg beef, pork, poultry).
- Thoroughly wash raw fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Store uncooked meats separate from vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods. Store it below other foods so there is no chance it will drip onto other foods.
- Always thaw ready-to-eat frozen food in the fridge or microwave - don't thaw at room temperature.
- Keep hot food hot (above 60°C) and cold foods cold (at or below 5°C).
- Wash and dry your hands before preparing food.
- Wash hands, knives and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods to avoid contaminating cooked and ready to eat foods.

For more information visit www.foodstandards.gov.au

What do I need to know about mercury in fish?

It is recommended you eat fish as part of a healthy diet during pregnancy as it offers many benefits to both yourself and the growth and development of your baby. However, deep fried fish is high in fat and should be eaten only sometimes and in small amounts.

Mercury, a naturally occurring heavy metal found in our environment, can build up in some types of fish. Pregnant women need to be careful of the types and amounts of fish they eat as their baby is more at risk to the effects of mercury. Following these guidelines will ensure that yourself and your baby do not get too much mercury.

If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, you can eat up to:

2 –3 serves of any fish or seafood per week not listed below

OR

1 serve of sea perch/orange roughy or catfish per week and no other fish consumed that week

OR

1 serve per fortnight of shark or swordfish/broadbill/marlin and no other fish consumed that fortnight.

Note: 1 serve of fish = 150 g portion

For more information visit www.foodstandards.gov.au

Is there anything I can do to lower the risk of allergies in my baby?

There is no evidence that changes to a mother's diet while pregnant will reduce the chance of her baby developing a food allergy.

Are fish oils important in pregnancy?

Research is currently underway showing omega-3 fatty acid supplements taken during pregnancy and breast feeding may benefit the child's brain development. You can find these Omega-3 fatty acids in oily fish such as mackerel, herrings, sardines, salmon and tuna and other seafood. Try to include an oily fish meal twice each week.

Do I need to take a vitamin and mineral supplement?

If you eat a healthy diet from all the food groups, this should provide all the nutrients you need. Sometimes your doctor, midwife or dietitian may suggest an iron or calcium supplement. Check with your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian before taking vitamin, mineral or herbal supplements.

- You can also contact the Medicines and Drug Information Centre at the Women's & Children's Hospital on (08) 8161 7222.

What about iodine?

Iodine is important for the normal development of your baby during pregnancy and breast feeding.

If you are not having 2-3 serves of ocean fish each week and using iodised salt we recommend you speak to your doctor about taking an iodine supplement.

Note: Many pregnancy multivitamin & mineral supplements now contain iodine.

What if I am a vegetarian?

When someone says they are a 'Vegetarian' it can mean a number of different things. 'Lacto-ovo Vegetarians' avoid meat, fish and chicken, but include eggs and dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt. 'Vegan vegetarians' avoid all food from animals including meat, milk and eggs.

- If you are vegetarian make sure you choose a variety of protein foods such as dairy products, legumes, cereals/ grains and nuts/seeds.
- If you choose to follow a vegan diet you should take extra care to include a variety of protein foods over the day. Some ideas are:
 - pasta with a lentil sauce
 - falafel - legumes and tahini
 - baked beans on toast
 - peanut butter on wholegrain bread

- Soy drinks with added calcium are very useful for vegans to help meet their requirements for calcium.
- For both lacto-ovo and vegan vegetarians, it can be very difficult to meet your iron needs in pregnancy. Vegetarian sources of iron include wholegrain breads and cereals, legumes and nuts, green leafy vegetables and eggs. Eating or drinking a vitamin C rich food eg. fruit or juice at the same meal will help the absorption of iron from these foods. Cheese should not be used as a regular meat replacement as it is low in iron.
- A strict vegan diet can be low in vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is important for the normal development of the brain, spinal cord and nervous system of your baby. If you are a vegan vegetarian and pregnant or breast feeding you are advised to take a B12 supplement, or consider including some milk, egg or fish in your diet during this time.

Whether you are vegetarian or vegan, you should ensure you are getting enough energy from your food to meet the extra demands of pregnancy. A good way to check this is to make sure you are gaining enough weight.

Vegetarians who are pregnant may benefit from seeing a dietitian to ensure they are getting enough iron, zinc, calcium and good quality protein to meet their needs.

Are cravings okay?

It is common to have cravings for certain foods during pregnancy. Try not to let these cravings stop you from eating a good variety of healthy foods. Cravings don't indicate that you are not eating enough of a certain food or nutrient.

Can I drink alcohol while I'm pregnant?

Alcohol can harm your baby for life. It is safest to avoid alcohol during pregnancy or if you are planning a pregnancy.

If you are pregnant and you need help to stop drinking alcohol, contact the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (24hr phone counselling) on 1300 131 340.

Are herbal teas safe?

There are no standards as to how herbal teas are made and what they contain. Therefore we can't be sure about how safe they are to drink during pregnancy. Be cautious if using herbal teas.

How much caffeine can I have?

Tea, coffee and cola drinks contain caffeine. Large amounts of caffeine can harm your baby. It is best to drink no more than 2-3 cups of tea, coffee or cola drinks a day.

If I am having twins or triplets, do I have to eat more food?

If you are pregnant with twins or triplets, you need more calcium, protein, iron and folate than mothers having a single baby. The quality of your diet is even more important to make sure you meet the needs of both yourself and your babies.

Some important points:

- Try to have 1000mls of milk or 4 - 5 serves of dairy foods per day.
- Have a protein food (meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese, nuts or legumes) at each meal.
- Take iron and folic acid supplements.
- It is normal to gain more weight than women having one baby ie. 16-20kg

What should I do if I have morning sickness?

Morning sickness doesn't only happen in the morning, it can happen at any time of the day. Some women have 'morning sickness' for just a few weeks, others are not well for the first three months, and others feel unwell for most of their pregnancy.

See your Doctor if you have severe, constant vomiting.

Tips to help deal with morning sickness

- Sip dry ginger ale or flat lemonade slowly and in small amounts to help settle your stomach.
- As you begin to feel better, try sips of more nutritious drinks like cold diluted fruit juices, nectars or vegetable juices. Or you could try soup.
- If you tend to feel unwell or vomit first thing in the morning, keep some dry biscuits or dried fruit next to your bed and eat something before you get up.
- Have a light breakfast once you begin feeling better (eg cereal and low fat milk or toast and honey).
- Eat small amounts, often (every 1-2 hours) – don't let your stomach get too full or too empty.
- Eat foods which are easy to digest and provide energy, such as plain biscuits, toast/bread with a spread, jelly, dry cereal, or stewed fruit.
- Eat and drink slowly.
- Try not to lie down straight after eating or drinking.
- Sometimes it helps to have your drinks between meals rather than with meals.
- Cold foods and drinks may be better than hot – hot foods often have a stronger smell. Try sandwiches, cereals, fruit and salad.
- Low fat foods may be better than full fat. Try low fat yoghurt, cheese or ice-cream, smoothies, milkshakes, custard and fruit.

- Try a supper snack such as a cheese sandwich, fruit and yoghurt, milk and Milo™ or Actavite™ if you feel better at that time of the day.

How can I treat constipation?

Constipation is not related to how often you go but how difficult it is to pass a bowel motion. Constipation happens for a few reasons:

- Early in pregnancy, your digestion slows down and your bowel relaxes, so foods move through much slower.
- Near the end of pregnancy when the baby is large, it presses on the bowel and slows the movement through the bowel causing constipation.
- Iron supplements can also cause constipation.

Eating high fibre foods and drinking plenty of fluids can help relieve constipation.

High fibre foods include:

- Wholemeal and wholegrain bread.
- Wholegrain cereals e.g. All Bran™, Weet-Bix™, muesli, porridge, brown rice and wholemeal pasta.
- Fruits and vegetables, especially the skin and stalks.
- Legumes eg baked beans, red kidney beans, red and yellow lentils.

Hints:

- Unprocessed bran, oat bran or psyllium husks sprinkled onto cereals is also a good way to add fibre to your breakfast.
- Try prunes, prune juice or kiwi fruit.
- Remember to have lots of fluids - water is best. Try to have at least 8 glasses or cups of fluid per day.
- Exercise also helps improve constipation. Regular walking can be helpful.
- A fibre supplement may also help. Speak to your pharmacist, doctor or midwife regarding these products.

Why am I having indigestion and heart burn?

Indigestion and heart burn can occur at any time during pregnancy but is more common near the end of pregnancy. As the baby grows it may press against the stomach pushing the contents up into the oesophagus or 'food pipe' which creates a burning feeling.

Heartburn can also result when pregnancy hormones relax the sphincter between the stomach and food pipe. This can cause stomach contents to travel into the food pipe, also creating a burning sensation.

It may help if you:

- avoid very spiced or seasoned foods
- avoid fried or fatty foods
- limit caffeine by drinking less tea, coffee and cola drinks
- avoid alcohol
- have small meals, often - never let your stomach get too full or too empty
- try drinking between meals instead of with meals
- try to eat slowly and relax at meal times
- sleep with two pillows to raise your head
- ask your doctor if you need medication

Healthy eating and breastfeeding

Is nutrition important when I am breastfeeding?

Breast milk gives your baby the best start in life. When you are breastfeeding your body still needs some extra nutrients. These nutrients include energy, protein and iodine. You can get these extra nutrients easily by continuing to choose a variety of foods from the five food groups.



How much extra energy (calories/kilojoules) do I need?

Making breastmilk for your baby uses more energy (calories) than at any time in your pregnancy. This means it is a perfect time to slowly work towards your pre-pregnancy weight. Due to the demands of making milk, you may feel hungrier than usual. Choosing healthy snacks is a good way to look after yourself and help keep you and your baby well nourished.

Healthy Snack Ideas:

- fresh fruit makes a quick, easy snack
- dried fruit, nuts or seeds
- cracker biscuits with cheese or spread such as peanut butter
- fruit bread (try toasted), English muffins, pikelets, rice cakes
- plain fruit buns
- milk drinks - try fruit and milk blended together to make a fruit smoothie
- tub of yoghurt
- try blending yoghurt with fruit or fruit juice

Where do I get extra protein from?

Most Australians eat more protein than needed. Vegetarians and women with smaller intakes may need to take extra care and increase the amount of protein in their diet. While breastfeeding, choose an extra serve from the meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes group. Dairy foods also provide extra protein.

Try to include some protein at each meal:

- cereal and milk, or toast and peanut butter, or baked beans for breakfast
- meat, fish, chicken, or cheese in a sandwich for lunch
- include meat, fish, chicken, lentils or legumes with the evening meal

- include protein foods for snacks, eg handful of nuts and dried fruit, cheese and crackers, biscuits with peanut butter, milk drink etc.

What about Calcium?

You still need calcium when you are breastfeeding (just like when you were pregnant). Try to include 3–4 serves a day from the milk and milk products group. It may be useful to continue taking a calcium supplement if your intake of milk and milk products is low.

What about Iodine?

Your body needs even more iodine while you are breastfeeding, to meet you and your baby's needs. If you are not having 2-3 serves of ocean fish each week and using iodised salt we recommend you talk to your doctor about taking an iodine supplement or using a pregnancy and breastfeeding multivitamin & mineral supplement that includes iodine.

Do I need extra drinks when breastfeeding?

Most women find they are thirstier than usual while breastfeeding. Drink enough fluid to meet your thirst but there is no need to drink overly large amounts. More fluid does not make more breast milk. Choose healthy drinks - either water (this is the best thirst quencher), milk or juice. Limit tea, coffee, alcohol and sweetened soft drinks.



How do I increase my supply of breast milk?

Extra fluids or extra foods do not help to make more breast milk. Milk supply is largely based on how often your baby feeds on the breast. If your baby suckles more, you will make more milk. If your baby suckles less, you will make less milk. Therefore, the best way to increase your supply of milk is to feed your baby more often. It will also help if you empty one breast before offering the other.

Is it okay to lose weight while I am breastfeeding?

Most women are keen to return to their pre-pregnancy weight once their baby is born. Breastfeeding is a great way of doing this as it helps to use up fat stores gained during pregnancy. Avoid crash diets or rapid weight loss. Remember it took nine months to put the weight on so it may take this time (plus extra) to lose it again. So don't rush it!

Very restricted diets may reduce your breast milk supply and can leave you feeling run down and tired. Instead, continue to choose a variety of foods from the five food groups and limit the amount of extra foods (eg. cakes, biscuits, fatty

foods, and alcohol). Try to get some regular exercise each day - walking your baby in a pram is a great start.

Some women find they lose weight too quickly while breastfeeding. If this is the case, try and make sure you eat regular meals and snacks and don't miss meals. It is easy to forget about looking after yourself with a new baby, but you will be able to care for your baby better and enjoy motherhood more if you take some time for yourself. Try to plan ahead so that you have suitable snacks and food on hand that can be easily prepared. Make time to sit down and eat – try eating healthy snacks while feeding your baby. Milk drinks are an easy way to get more energy as well as other nutrients.

Should I avoid certain foods?

There are many old wives tales about foods that should be avoided whilst breastfeeding as they might "come through" in the milk. However there is no need to avoid any particular foods. Some strongly flavoured foods such as curries or cabbage may affect the flavour of the milk slightly but will do no harm. Most babies accept these different flavours well. In fact, babies whose mothers eat a range of different flavours are more likely to accept new flavours themselves when they are introduced to solids. So it can be a positive thing. If you feel that a particular food you eat may upset your baby, it will probably do no harm to leave it out of your diet.

Are tea, coffee and cola drinks OK?

Some caffeine from tea, coffee and cola drinks will pass into the breast milk but small quantities are not considered harmful. Try to limit your intake to 2-3 cups of tea, coffee or cola a day.

What about Alcohol?

Alcohol, like most drugs, can be passed through to the breast milk. Not drinking alcohol is the safest option, but if you choose to drink it is recommended that you:

- breastfeed your baby before drinking alcohol
- limit to only a small amount i.e. one standard drink
- wait a few hours before breastfeeding again.

If you choose to drink more than this, or need to feed your baby more frequently, it may be best to feed with previously expressed breast milk.

You can find more information from the CYWHS Medicines and Drug Information Centre on 08 8161 7222, or the www.cyh.com pages "Breastfeeding - medicines & drugs" and "Breastfeeding - expressing & storing breast milk."

Some people believe that drinking stout or other alcoholic drinks can increase your milk supply, however this is not true.

Good Nutrition for Life

Good nutrition is also important after pregnancy and breastfeeding to ensure good health for yourself and your family.

Food preferences and eating habits developed early in childhood are often carried into adulthood. To make sure children grow up to be healthy adults we need to teach them healthy eating habits as early as possible. It is also important to be a good role model, show your children how much you enjoy eating healthy foods and they will want to follow.



**If you would like more information on feeding babies and children,
check the website www.cyh.com or phone the
Parent Helpline on 1300 364 100**

This publication has been prepared by the Nutrition Department of the Children, Youth and Women's Health Service. Information in this publication should not be used as an alternative to professional advice.

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