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## Breastfeeding Diet

### Definition

The aim of the diet for Breastfeeding is to provide sufficient nutrients for the mother to remain well nourished herself whilst providing an adequate supply of quality breast milk for her baby.

### Diet should be high in

1. **COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATE** foods such as wholemeal bread, crispbreads, wholegrain cereals, rice and pasta. Breastfeeding places a great demand on mother's blood sugar supply and if the diet is not adequate in complex carbohydrate foods, sugar cravings and extreme hunger may occur. Eat every two to three hours to maintain a good blood sugar supply and control hunger. Some simple sugars in the form of jam, honey, marmalade and low fat, high fibre cakes as well as fresh fruit for between meal snacks are acceptable.
2. **FLUIDS:** drink more than 8 glasses of fluid daily, spread over waking hours and through the night when night-feeding. Drink at least one glass of water each time baby has a feed. Fluid is the most critical factor in ensuring an adequate volume of breast milk for baby. Limit fruit juices, low calorie and normal soft drinks and cordials, caffeine beverages and alcohol.
3. **CALCIUM:** to provide sufficient calcium for the breast milk without compromising mother's calcium reserves. A consistent intake is more important than maintaining an unnaturally high intake of calcium-rich foods. Drink 600mls (2 - 2 1/2 cups) milk or its equivalent in dairy foods or fortified soy milk daily.
4. **PROTEIN** rich foods. Protein needs to be increased to the equivalent of 30-60g meat, chicken, fish or 1/2 to 1 cup beans or 30g cheese or 1 egg daily.
5. **ZINC-** Zinc levels are believed to decrease in breast milk at around six months. Supplementation of zinc is recommended at this time to ensure adequate levels if dietary intake is inadequate.
6. **IRON-** Iron levels are thought to decrease in breast milk at around four months of age. Supplementation of iron at this time is recommended if dietary intake is inadequate.
7. **ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS -** EFA's are important for the baby's visual and brain development. Sources include oily fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines and herring), wheatgerm and nut oils.



### Diet should be low in

1. **FATS** since these contribute excess calories and do not assist in weight control. Occasionally, this guideline needs to be relaxed as some breastfeeding mums lose a lot of weight and find it difficult to eat the volume of low fat food needed to maintain a healthy weight.
2. Any foods which by elimination and challenge appear to provoke symptoms in baby (such as hives or digestive upsets) when included in mother's diet. Certain substances are soluble in breast-milk, such as salicylate (see the Hives and Hyperactivity Diet on the Healthpoint). However, it is important to guard against making mother's diet unnecessarily restrictive.
3. **Alcohol.** Alcohol passes through to the breast milk. It is dehydrating to the mother and may reduce milk production and may have harmful effects on the baby if consumed in high amounts. A maximum of 1-2 glasses of alcohol per day is recommended, immediately following a feed so that the concentration is minimal by the time the next feed is due.

### Sample meal plan

Two glasses of water on rising.

#### Breakfast

1. 1 1/2 to 2 cups rolled oats porridge made on low fat milk or 1 1/2 to 2 cups high fibre cereal or 3-4 slices wholemeal or grain bread or raisin toast or 2-3 crumpets with honey or jam.
  2. 1 egg, boiled, poached or scrambled or 1 slice cheese or 1/2cup baked beans.
  3. One piece fresh fruit or 1 cup fruit salad.
- One to two glasses water.

#### Morning tea

1. 1-2 crumpets or 1 slice low fat carrot cake.
  2. Small glass milk.
- One to two glasses water.

## **Lunch**

1. 2-4 slices wholemeal bread or 1-2 grain bread rolls with a little avocado.
  2. 2 slices lean cold meat.
  3. Plenty of fresh salad.
  4. One piece fresh fruit.
- One to two glasses water.

## **Afternoon tea**

1. One wholemeal fruit bun or one peanut butter sandwich with celery.
- One to two glasses water.

## **Dinner**

1. 90-150g lean red meat, diet mince, lamb, pork or chicken flesh or vegetarian meat substitute with low fat flavourings or 180-300g grilled or poached fish or 2 egg omelette with ham and cheese.
  2. Steamed or mashed potato or 1 cup rice or pasta.
  3. Plenty of lightly cooked vegetables or salad.
  4. One piece fresh fruit or 1 cup fruit salad.
- One to two glasses water.

## **Supper**

1. 1-2 crumpets with jam or honey.
2. Small glass milk or a milk pudding or yoghurt.

## **Remember**

1. Eat plenty of bread and cereal foods at regular intervals throughout the day. Choose wholemeal as much as possible and use a little jam or honey.
2. Drink water at every feed and in between.
3. Drink 600mls (2 1/4 cups) milk daily or its equivalent in dairy foods.
4. Eat protein foods at least twice daily.

## **Organisations & support groups**

See the Australian Breastfeeding Association topic on the Healthpoint.

DISCLAIMER : This information is an educational aid only. It is not intended to replace medical advice for individual conditions or treatments.  
Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or naturopath before following any medical regimen to see whether it is safe and effective for you.