

Healthy eating for breastfeeding mothers

Including a variety of healthy foods can support postnatal recovery and breastfeeding.

Use the guide below to help you make the best choices when planning what you eat.

Food Group	Number of serves per day for women 19-50 yrs	1 serve equals...
Vegetables and legumes/ beans	7½	½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables (e.g. broccoli, carrot, pumpkin or spinach) ½ cup cooked, dried or canned beans, chickpeas or lentils 1 cup raw leafy green vegetables ½ medium potato, or other starchy vegetable (sweet potato, taro, or cassava) ½ cup sweet corn
Fruit	2	1 piece medium sized fruit (e.g. apple, banana, orange, pear) 2 pieces smaller fruit (apricot, kiwi fruit, plums) 1 cup diced, cooked or canned fruit ½ cup 100% juice 30g dried fruit (1½ tablespoons sultanas, 4 dried apricot halves)
Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain	9	1 slice of bread or ½ medium bread roll or flat bread ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, quinoa, barley, porridge, buckwheat, semolina, cornmeal ¾ cup breakfast cereal flakes ¼ cup muesli 3 crisp breads 1 crumpet or 1 small English muffin or scone
Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans	2½	65 g cooked lean red meats (e.g. beef, lamb, pork, venison or kangaroo) ½ cup lean mince, 2 small chops, 2 slices roast meat 80 g cooked poultry (e.g. chicken, turkey) 100 g cooked fish fillet or 1 small can fish 2 large eggs (120 g) 1 cup (170 g) cooked dried beans, lentils, chickpeas, split peas, canned beans 170 g tofu 1/3 cup (30 g) unsalted nuts, seeds or paste, no added salt Or 2 tablespoons nut paste
Milk, yogurt, cheese and/or alternatives (mostly reduced fat)	2½	1 cup (250 ml) milk 40 g (2 slices) hard cheese (e.g. cheddar) 120 g ricotta cheese 200 g yoghurt
Additional serves for taller or more active women	0–2½	<i>Additional serves from the five food groups or</i> 3–4 sweet biscuits 30 g potato crisps 2 scoops ice cream 1 tablespoon (20 g) oil

Suggested Meal Plan

This sample meal plan is one example of how to fit your nutrition needs (from the previous page) into a day's eating:

BREAKFAST	2 slices of toasted multigrain / wholemeal bread 1 cup of baked beans
MORNING TEA	200g low fat yoghurt ½ cup muesli
LUNCH	90 g tuna & salad on multi grain roll 1 medium piece fresh fruit
AFTERNOON TEA	1 slice of cheese on 3 crisp breads 1 cup raw vegetable sticks with hummus OR 2 tablespoons peanut butter
DINNER	65g cooked lean meat or 80g cooked chicken 1 ½ cups cooked mixed vegetables 1 medium potato OR 1 cup cooked rice/pasta 1 cup fresh fruit salad
SUPPER	1 cup reduced fat milk 1 whole grain English muffin Drink plenty of water during the day.

Iodine

Iodine is important for your baby's growth and brain development. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should take a supplement with 150mcg (micrograms) of iodine.

You still need to consume foods that are high in iodine. These include fresh, cooked seafood, bread with added iodine, eggs and dairy.

Do not take kelp (seaweed) supplements or kelp based products. These have varying amounts of iodine and may have excess mercury.

Fluid

When you are breastfeeding, you need to drink more to replace the fluid used in breast milk (~700 ml/day).

Achieve this by having a drink, such as water or reduced fat milk (within your dairy serve recommendations) every time your baby feeds. You will also need to drink more fluid at other times during the day.

Caffeine

Caffeine passes into your breast milk. Limit drinks high in caffeine to 2 to 4 each day.

High caffeine drinks include tea, coffee, cola, cocoa and drinks with added guarana (energy drinks or guarana powder added to chocolate/milk drinks).

Alcohol

Avoid alcohol while breastfeeding, especially in the first month after you have your baby. Alcohol passes quickly into your breast milk. After 30–60 minutes, your breast milk has the same blood alcohol as you do.

If you do drink, limit the amount (1 standard drink/day) and have it just after feeding. Wait 2–3 hours before feeding again to allow a lower alcohol level in your breast milk by the time of the next feed.

Avoiding foods during breastfeeding

Mothers may be told to avoid certain foods when breastfeeding. Severe allergic reactions are rare in breast fed babies. Food intolerances can occur. If you are concerned what you are eating is affecting your baby, contact your doctor or an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

Managing constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Eat high fibre foods such as wholemeal/ wholegrain breads and cereals, fruits, prunes, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds
- Enjoy daily gentle exercise, such as walking

Trying to lose weight while breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can help you return to your pre-pregnancy weight, as your body uses fat as fuel to make breastmilk. The greatest amount of weight loss generally occurs in the first 3 months after birth. It then continues at a slow and steady rate until 6 months after birth.

When you are trying to lose your pregnancy weight, it is important you still meet your nutritional needs. Try these helpful hints:

- Follow the meal plan in this handout (or similar).
- Do not skip meals.
- Limit foods high in fat and sugar. These include lollies, chocolate, soft drinks, cakes, sweet biscuits, chips and take-away food.
- Use healthy cooking methods like steaming, boiling, microwaving, grilling and stir frying.
- Trim fat from meats and avoid chicken skin.
- Do some gentle exercise such as taking your baby for a walk. If available, attend physiotherapy postnatal classes.
- Plan your healthy meals and snacks ahead of time.

Are you losing weight too quickly?

If you are losing too much weight when you are breastfeeding it is important you do not stop breastfeeding. Find ways to eat more nutritious foods.

Try these suggestions:

- Don't skip meals.
- Have three main meals and three between-meal snacks.
- Keep easy to prepare nutritious snacks handy (e.g. crisp-breads and cheese, fresh fruit, yoghurt, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, canned beans, flavoured milk, fruit smoothies, breakfast cereals and milk).
- Prepare a packed lunch or variety of snacks to have beside you when breastfeeding.
- Prepare and freeze meals in advance (or ask your friends / family to help).
- Plan your healthy meals & snacks ahead of time.

How long should you breastfeed your baby?

Breastfeeding should provide all of your baby's nutritional needs for the first 6 months of life.

After you start introducing solids at around 6 months, it is recommended that you continue breastfeeding for at least 12 months, into the second year of life and for as long as you and your baby & are happy to continue.

For further breastfeeding information, go to:

<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/breastfeeding>

www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Or call the Australian Breastfeeding Association:

24 hour hotline: 1800 686 268

Things I can do to improve my diet for breastfeeding

1.

2.

3.

4.

For further information contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist: _____

Content in this handout has been informed by

1. National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council
2. Giglia R. Alcohol and lactation: a systematic review. *J Dietitians Association of Australia* 2006; **63**:103-116.
3. Institute of Medicine (2009). Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Re-examining the Guidelines, National Academies Press.
4. National Health and Medical Research Council (2010), Public Statement, *Iodine Supplementation for pregnant and breastfeeding women*.
5. National Health and Medical Research Council (2012) Infant Feeding Guidelines. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council.

This is a consensus document from Dietitian/ Nutritionists from the Nutrition Education Materials Online, "NEMO", team.
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