

Nutrition for Breastfeeding

This fact sheet provides nutrition information for you and your baby when you are breastfeeding.

Breastmilk gives your baby the best start in life. When you are breastfeeding, your body needs extra nutrients. These nutrients include energy, protein, calcium, iron and iodine.

You can get these extra nutrients by choosing a wide variety of foods every day. Try to:

- Eat plenty of wholegrain breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables and legumes
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry
 - Or, alternatives such as eggs, legumes and nuts
- Include dairy products such as milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives (e.g. calcium fortified soy products such as So Good™ soy milk).
- Aim for 2-3 serves of oily fish (eg. Salmon) per week.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Choose foods low in saturated fat, salt and sugar

For more information, refer to the [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding](https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/), <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/>.

Key nutrients for breastfeeding

Energy (Calories/kilojoules)

Making breastmilk for your baby uses more energy (calories/kilojoules) than at any other time during your pregnancy and you may feel hungrier than usual. Following a healthy eating pattern and consuming nourishing meals will support the nutritional needs for you and your baby during this time.

Healthy Snack Ideas:

- Fresh fruit
- Dried fruit, nuts or seeds
- Wholegrain cracker biscuits or rice cakes with cheese or spread such as peanut butter
- Toasted fruit bread, English muffins, pikelets, crumpets
- Milk based drinks – plain milk, Up&Go, Milo or try blending fruit, yoghurt and milk together to make a fruit smoothie
- Tub of yoghurt
- Vegetable sticks with dip
- Bliss balls (Home-made or store-bought)



For more information

Nutrition Department
 Women's and Children's Hospital
 72 King William Rd, North Adelaide SA 5006
 Telephone (08) 8161 7000
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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by WCHN consumers

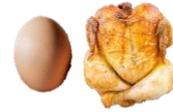


Government of South Australia

Women's and Children's Health Network

Protein

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding recommends consuming **2 ½ serves a day*** of foods from the lean meat/fish/poultry/eggs/nuts/legumes food group while breastfeeding.



A serve of a lean meat/fish/poultry/eggs/nuts/legumes looks like:

- 65g of cooked lean red meats such as lamb, beef or pork
- 80g cooked lean poultry such as chicken or turkey
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup of cooked or canned legumes/beans such as chickpeas and lentils
- 170g tofu

**Vegetarian/vegan women may need to increase the amount of protein per day while breastfeeding. For more information, visit "Healthy Eating for Vegetarian or Vegan Mothers" resource (link on page 4).*

Calcium

Calcium is another important nutrient while breastfeeding. Breastmilk will always have enough calcium for your baby, but if you do not meet your calcium needs, this may cause bone problems for you later in life.



It is important to try to include **3 serves a day** of dairy/dairy alternative foods*. A serve of dairy or dairy alternative foods looks like:

- 1 cup of milk
- 1 cup of calcium fortified milk alternative drinks such as soy, rice or almond milk*
- 200g yoghurt
- 2 slices of hard cheese, such as cheddar

**Choose low or reduced fat varieties where possible*

If your intake of dairy/dairy alternatives is low, it may be useful to take a calcium supplement. Consult with your GP to see if this is appropriate for you.

Iron

Iron helps make red blood cells that carry oxygen around the body. Pregnancy and childbirth can reduce your body's iron stores, which may cause you to have low energy.

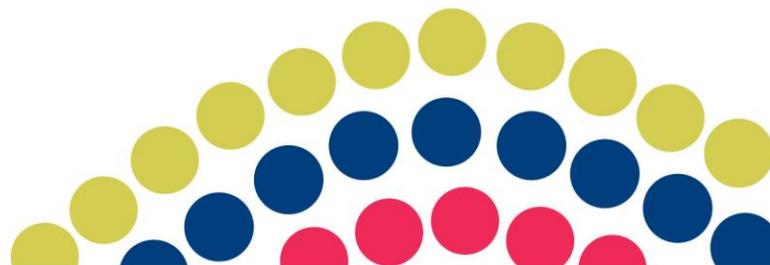


To ensure you are getting adequate iron, include in your diet:

- Red meat, poultry, and fish
- Wholemeal/wholegrain breads and cereals, beans/legumes, nuts/seeds and green leafy vegetables*

**These plant-based iron foods are not as easily absorbed by your body. Eat these foods with foods that are high in vitamin C (eg. Citrus fruits or vegetables) to help to improve absorption.*

For more information on a vegetarian/vegan diet and consuming adequate iron during breastfeeding visit "Healthy Eating for Vegetarian or Vegan Mothers" resource (link on page 4).



Iodine

Extra iodine is also needed when breastfeeding. It is recommended that all breastfeeding women should take a supplement or multivitamin containing 150ug of iodine*.



It is important to also consume iodine rich foods including bread, canned salmon, seaweed, dairy foods, eggs and iodised salt.

*Women with pre-existing thyroid conditions should seek advice from their doctor before taking an iodine supplement.

Other common questions for breastfeeding

Do I need extra drinks when breastfeeding?

Most women find they are thirstier than usual while breastfeeding. Drink enough fluid to meet your thirst. Water is the best choice to quench your thirst. Try to limit tea, coffee, alcohol and sweetened soft drinks (see below).



Are tea, coffee and cola drinks okay?

Some caffeine may pass into the breastmilk, but small quantities are not considered harmful. Try to limit your intake to 2–3 cups of tea, instant coffee or cola a day.

Be mindful that espresso-style strong coffee and energy drinks have higher levels of caffeine, and you should only consume 1 cup per day maximum of these.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that the safest option while breastfeeding is to avoid drinking alcohol, as it can be passed through to the breastmilk. However, if you do choose to have alcohol while breastfeeding, it is recommended to:

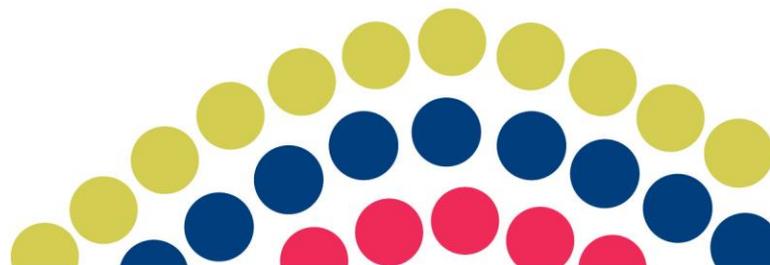
- Breastfeed your baby or express some milk before drinking alcohol
- Try to limit consumption to only a small amount at a time i.e. one standard drink
- Download the Feed Safe app (link below), developed by the Australian Breastfeeding Association, for personalised guidance around how long to wait to breastfeed after consuming alcohol
 - <http://www.feedsafe.net/>

How do I increase my supply of breastmilk?

Milk supply is largely based on how often and how effectively your baby feeds on the breast. The more milk that is taken from your breasts, the more milk you will produce.

If you are concerned about your milk supply, refer to the Australian Breastfeeding Association's resource regarding supply (see link below) or discuss with your midwife, GP or contact a lactation consultant for further advice.

- www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/baby-getting-enough-breastmilk



Is it okay to lose weight while I am breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding can help you to gradually lose weight. This occurs as your body's energy needs are increased while breastfeeding, which can help to use up fat stores gained during pregnancy.

Some women find they may lose weight too quickly while breastfeeding. If this is the case, try to make sure you are eating regular meals and snacks.

Very restrictive or crash diets are not recommended while breastfeeding. If you are concerned about your weight loss, consult your GP or dietitian.

Will exercise affect my milk supply?

Regular moderate exercise is important for good health and won't affect your milk supply. Exercise that you can enjoy with your baby is a great way to combine exercise with breastfeeding, such as walking with the pram.

Should I avoid certain foods?

There is no need to avoid any particular foods while breastfeeding, unless advised by a medical professional. Some strongly flavoured foods such as curries or cabbage may affect the flavour of the milk, 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 solid foods are introduced.

If you are concerned that a particular food you eat is upsetting your baby, consult with your GP or paediatrician.

More information

For further information contact your doctor or dietitian or refer to the following websites:

Nutrition Education Materials Online (NEMO)

"Healthy Eating for Vegetarian or Vegan Mothers" Resource

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/726063/antenatal-veganveget.pdf

The Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS)

Your local CaFHS offers breastfeeding clinics. Call 1300 733 606 to make an appointment

Pregnancy, Parenting and Child Health Information Online www.cyh.com

The Women's and Children's Hospital Breastfeeding Unit

Telephone (08) 8161 7971 during office hours to make an appointment

Australia Breastfeeding Association (ABA) Breastfeeding Helpline

Telephone 1800 686 268 (24 hours, 7 days a week) www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Raising Children Network

Raisingchildren.net.au

