



## DIET & BREASTFEEDING

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### "Are there foods I should eat or avoid while I'm breastfeeding?"

No. There are no foods (such as cow's milk) that you must have. (Cows don't "drink milk to make milk.") And there are no foods you must avoid. You can eat chocolate, spicy foods, onions, garlic, broccoli, and cabbage. The key is: everything in moderation. Mothers in Thailand and Mexico eat spicy foods while breastfeeding with no ill effects on their babies. Enjoy!

### "Do I need to eat and drink more than usual to make enough milk?"

No. Just "eat to hunger" and "drink to thirst."

### "If my diet is not perfect, will my milk still be good for my baby?"

Yes. Eating well is good for you. (It boosts your energy and resistance to illness.) But an ideal diet is not necessary to produce good quality milk. Nature provides first for your baby. It takes famine conditions for several weeks before a mother's milk is affected.



### "How will I know if my baby is reacting to something I've eaten?"

First, know that almost all babies have fussy periods. Reactions to food you eat are unusual. Your baby's fussiness is likely unrelated to your diet. If you suspect a food is affecting your baby, try avoiding it. (Cow's milk takes two weeks or so to clear.) Then try eating it again. The most likely culprits are protein foods such as dairy, soy, egg white, peanuts, and fish. Only changing your diet will tell you for sure.

### "Is it okay to diet while I'm breastfeeding?"

Yes. In fact, this may be the best time, as breastfeeding helps burn fat stores. But it's best to go slowly and lose weight gradually. Any diet should include at least 1800 calories/day. As with other food products, artificial sweeteners are all right in moderation, one to two servings per day.

### "Are there foods that will increase my milk supply?"

Not that we know of. Milk supply is based on how many times each day that the milk is drained well from your breasts. The more times you breastfeed or express your milk, the more milk you will make. For information on herbal and prescribed medicines that increase milk supply, talk to your lactation consultant.

### "As a vegetarian, is there anything special I need to know?"

Yes. You need to either eat foods that have vitamin B12 (such as eggs or dairy) or take supplements. If you are on a vegan or macrobiotic diet or any other diet that does not include animal products, be sure to get enough B12.

### "What about caffeine?"

As with all parts of your diet, think moderation. One or two cups of coffee (or other caffeinated drinks such as teas or colas) are not likely to cause a reaction. Unless a baby is unusually sensitive, there is no need to abstain.

### "Can I have an occasional glass of beer or wine while I'm breastfeeding?"

Yes. Moderate to heavy drinking is risky for your baby, but a little alcohol in the milk now and then has not been found to be harmful. Mothers who want to avoid any alcohol in their milk can have their drink right after nursing. Research shows that alcohol passes quickly into a mother's milk, peaking within 30-60 minutes (60-90 minutes when taken with food). But it also passes out of milk quickly. For a 55kg woman, it takes two to three hours for the alcohol in one glass of beer or wine to leave her milk.

There is no need to pump to make your milk alcohol-free. As blood alcohol levels drop, alcohol leaves the milk. If a breastfeeding mother has a stronger drink or more than one glass of beer or wine, it will take longer for the alcohol to pass out of her milk.

*This is general information and does not replace the advice of your physician or healthcare provider.  
If you have a problem you cannot solve quickly, seek help right away.  
Every baby is different, and your baby may not be average.  
If in doubt, contact your physician or other healthcare provider.*