

# NUTRITION FOR BREASTFEEDING

## Final weeks of pregnancy

Babies store up iron and vitamin D to carry them through the early months of life, so expectant moms should be sure they are getting enough in their diets. Mom has also stored up an extra 5 – 7 pounds to provide some of the extra calories necessary for milk production in early months.

## Nutrition for Breastfeeding moms:

When breastfeeding, moms need an extra 300 calories a day; a total of *at least* 1500 calories a day. Dieting is not recommended while breastfeeding. After the initial weight loss, you should eat to maintain your weight, and generally shouldn't lose more than a pound a week.

Try to eat a variety of healthy foods. You will need extra protein, three servings of calcium-rich foods per day, and plenty of fluids. See chapter 4 of PCN for specific recommendations.

Doctors generally recommend that you continue to take prenatal vitamins while breastfeeding.

## Foods to Avoid?

There are many old wives tales about foods that nursing mothers should avoid, and many recent research hypotheses about what foods to avoid. Much of this is controversial.

- If you have a strong family history of significant food allergies, consult with your care provider and baby's care provider for advice specific to your situation.
- Food bacteria: generally does not travel through breastmilk, so the pregnancy prohibition against raw fish, soft cheeses, and lunch meats typically does not apply when breastfeeding
- Mercury: Limit tuna intake to 2 cans a week. Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin.
- "Fussy" foods: some people find that cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower cause gassy babies. Some people believe spicy foods cause colic, but there's no evidence. If baby seems fussy in response to what you eat, keep a diary that tracks what you eat, what your activities are, and how baby acts. You may discover that activities or time of day is the culprit.
- Allergens: Be aware of signs of food sensitivity, such as severe diaper rash, skin rashes, chronic runny noses, diarrhea, or excessive fussiness, and consult your doctor. The most common allergens in mom's diet are cow's milk, eggs, shellfish, wheat, nuts, and peanuts.

## Nutrition for Baby

In general, breastmilk meets every nutritional need of your baby for the first six months of life. There is no need to supplement with water, formula, or solid foods till six months.

For a while, iron supplements were believed to be necessary, but recent research has shown that a healthy, full-term baby rarely needs iron supplementation before six months of age. After 6 months, add in iron-fortified solid foods to baby's diet.

Fluoride supplements may be recommended for babies 6 months to 3 years, if their main water supply is not supplemented with fluoride (most city water sources are).

Vitamin D supplements may be helpful for bone development for babies who get very little exposure to the sun, and whose mothers were vitamin D deficient.

For more information, see PCN 431.