

## Healthy eating for breastfeeding mothers

Healthy eating is important when you are breastfeeding. Your body has a greater need for most nutrients. Some of the extra energy required for breastfeeding comes from body fat stored during pregnancy. However, to meet your extra nutrient needs, it is important to eat a variety of nutritious foods. Use the guide below to help you make the best choices when planning what you eat.

Food Group	Number of serves per day 19-50 yrs	1 serve equals...
<b>Vegetables and legumes/ beans</b>	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 (no added salt) 1 cup raw leafy green vegetables ½ medium potato, or other starchy vegetable (sweet potato, taro, or cassava) ½ cup sweet corn
<b>Fruit</b>	2	1 piece medium sized fruit (e.g. apple, banana, orange, pear) 2 pieces smaller fruit (e.g. apricot, kiwi fruit, plums) 1 cup diced, cooked or canned fruit ½ cup 100% juice 30g dried fruit (e.g. 1½ tablespoons sultanas, 4 dried apricot halves)
<b>Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain</b>	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 ⅔ cup breakfast cereal flakes ¼ cup muesli 3 crisp breads 1 crumpet or 1 small English muffin or scone
<b>Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans</b>	2½	65 g cooked lean red meats (e.g. beef, lamb, pork, venison or kangaroo) or 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, no added salt, not in brine 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, no added salt
<b>Milk, yogurt, cheese and/or alternatives (mostly reduced fat)</b>	2½	1 cup (250 ml) milk 40 g (2 slices) hard cheese (e.g. cheddar) 120 g ricotta cheese 200 g yoghurt
<b>Additional serves for taller or more active women</b>	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:

<b>BREAKFAST</b>	2 slices of toasted multi grain/whole meal bread 1 cup of baked beans
<b>MORNING TEA</b>	200g low fat yoghurt ½ cup muesli
<b>LUNCH</b>	90 g tuna & salad on multi grain roll 1 medium piece fresh fruit
<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>	1 slice of cheese on 3 crisp-breads 1 cup raw vegetable sticks with hummus OR 2 tablespoons peanut butter
<b>DINNER</b>	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
<b>SUPPER</b>	1 cup reduced fat milk 1 whole grain English muffin
	Drink plenty of water during the day.

## Iodine

Adequate iodine in pregnancy is needed for your baby's growth and brain development. Your body needs more iodine during pregnancy.

All women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering pregnancy, should take a supplement of 150mcg (micrograms) of iodine.

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

Do not take kelp (seaweed) supplements or kelp based products due to varying amounts of iodine and risk of heavy metals such as mercury.

## **Fluid**

When you are breastfeeding, you need to drink more to replace the fluid used in breast milk (~700 ml/day). It is a good idea to have a drink, such as a glass of water or fat reduced 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 too.

## **Caffeine**

Caffeine passes into your breast milk, so try to limit drinks high in caffeine such as tea, coffee, cola, cocoa and drinks with added guarana (energy drinks or guarana powder added to chocolate/milk drinks). If you have drinks high in caffeine, limit your total intake of these food and drinks to 2 to 4 each day.

## **Alcohol**

Avoid alcohol while breastfeeding, especially in the first month after you have your baby. Alcohol passes quickly into your breast milk. Did you know that 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 certain foods during breastfeeding**

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

## **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

## **Vegetarian and Vegan mothers**

See the following Queensland Health resources:

- 'Healthy eating for vegetarian pregnant & breastfeeding mothers'.
- 'Healthy eating for vegan and breastfeeding mothers'.

[https://www.health.qld.gov.au/nutrition/nemo\\_antenatal](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/nutrition/nemo_antenatal)

## **Trying to lose weight while breastfeeding**

Breast feeding helps you shape up. 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. Breastfeeding your baby should help you return to your pre-pregnancy weight, as some of the fat stores you laid down during pregnancy are used as fuel to make breast milk.

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 such as lollies, chocolate, soft drinks, cakes, sweet biscuits, chips and fatty take-away food.
- Use healthy cooking methods such as 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.

Regular physical activity can also assist with weight management. See the following Queensland Health resources:

- 'Healthy Weight gain during pregnancy'
  - 'Exercising during pregnancy'
- [https://www.health.qld.gov.au/nutrition/nemo\\_antenatal](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/nutrition/nemo_antenatal)

## **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.

Instead, 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 on hand (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 in a container beside you when breastfeeding.
- Prepare and freeze meals in advance when possible (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, then 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:

[www.health.qld.gov.au/breastfeeding/](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/breastfeeding/)  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://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.