



Breastfeeding: best for baby



Breastfeeding is the optimal way to feed a baby from birth and during weaning. Mothers should continue to breast feed for as long as they wish because of the health and psychological benefits that breast feeding provides.

Benefits of breastfeeding

Breastmilk contains the ideal nutrient make up for babies. It also has other advantages over formula milk:

- ♦ It contains antibodies that boost the immune system so that breastfed babies suffer less illness and infection. Mothers produce antibodies in response to viruses and bacteria in the environment, that both mother and baby share, and these antibodies are passed onto to the baby in breastmilk
- ♦ Breastfed babies are less likely to become constipated, have gastroenteritis or stomach upsets than formula fed babies.

Research suggests that there are health benefits from being breastfed that continue after breastfeeding has ceased. Babies who have been breastfed:

- ♦ have fewer ear infections
- ♦ are at lower risk of childhood diabetes
- ♦ are less likely to get some childhood cancers

Getting started



Mothers and babies need to learn how to breastfeed; some mothers find it easier than others. Mothers should be shown the best way to position and attach their baby to their breast to ensure they breastfeed successfully. Good attachment will help to prevent

most breastfeeding problems such as sore nipples.

Local help and support for breastfeeding mothers is available from midwives and health visitors or from breastfeeding counsellors via the National Breastfeeding Helpline Tel: 0844 2090920. It is open 9:30am-9:30pm 7 days per week, www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk

Colostrum is the particularly important breastmilk produced in the first few days after birth: it is very high in antibodies to boost babies' immune systems. Because it is a very concentrated milk babies take very small feeds in the first few days. A breastfeed should be offered each time the baby wakes.

Two to three days after the birth, colostrum changes into a more dilute milk and mothers' breasts may become full and heavy for about 24 hours as blood and lymph flow to the breasts increases. Babies begin demanding feeds more frequently at this time. Over the next 24 hours of demand feeding the supply of breastmilk should equate to the amounts the baby needs. The breasts will then feel more comfortable again. Most babies will then begin to take larger volumes and demand feeds less frequently. Some settle into a routine of feeding every 3-4 hours but others may demand feeds more frequently. Feeding on demand during the night as well as the day will provide all the milk that a baby needs.



Following the birth and in the early days of breastfeeding mothers should rest but once breastfeeding is established some regular physical activity, even just walking and pushing the pram, is ideal.

Breastfeeding Twins or Triplets

Twins and triplets can be successfully breastfed; between them, they will demand more breastmilk but mothers will still be able to produce all that they need. Feeding more than one baby is even more time consuming and these mothers need extra help with their other responsibilities.



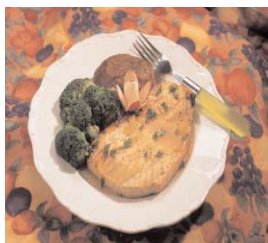
Healthy Eating while breastfeeding

During pregnancy, mothers' body stores of certain nutrients can become depleted. Eating a balanced diet based on the 5 food groups will help to replenish these stores.

- ♦ **Food Group 1 :Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods:** Eat a starchy (preferably wholegrain) food at each meal and some starchy snacks like crackers, scone, fruit bread
- ♦ **Food Group 2: Fruit and vegetables:** Include fruit and vegetables at all meals aiming for about 5 servings per day

- ♦ **Food Group 3: Milk, cheese and yogurt:** Include these foods 2-3 times per day - choosing low fat varieties if you prefer them
- ♦ **Food Group 4: Meat, fish, eggs, nuts and pulses:** Include at 2 meals each day. Mothers who do not eat meat and fish should include eggs, nuts and pulses at 2-3 meals per day instead
- ♦ **Food Group 5: Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar:** Foods that are high in fat or sugar should be limited to small amounts. Mothers should eat nutritious meals and snacks based mainly on the other 4 nutrient-rich food groups.
- ♦ **Fluid:** Excessive fluids are not needed but mothers should drink to their thirst and have a minimum of 8 drinks each day. Drinks include water, pure fruit juice, milk, tea, coffee and soup. Some mothers have a glass of water whilst breastfeeding. In very hot weather, more drinks may be needed to avoid being thirsty.

Foods to limit or avoid while breastfeeding:



Oily fish should be included each week but should not exceed 2 servings per week because they may contain toxins

Large fish such as shark, swordfish and marlin should be avoided altogether because they may contain small amounts of mercury.

Alcohol - ideally cut this out; breastfeeding mothers who do drink should limit themselves to only one unit of alcohol (e.g. a very small glass of wine) 2 hours or more before a breastfeed.

Caffeine in tea, coffee, chocolate and cola and energy drinks may cause some babies to be restless. Try to limit caffeine containing drinks or cut them out altogether if your baby seems to be affected by them.

Vitamin D and folic acid supplements

Breastfeeding mothers in the UK are advised to take 10mcg of vitamin D each day to prevent vitamin D deficiency in both them and their baby. Vitamin D is needed for bone health and the immune system. Babies of mothers who did not take vitamin D supplements during pregnancy may be born with low levels of vitamin D. There is a very small chance that these babies may have fits due to low levels of calcium. Older babies and toddlers with very low levels of vitamin D can develop rickets.

All mothers who are likely to become pregnant again should take 400mcg folic acid each day. Exclusive breastfeeding reduces the chance of becoming pregnant

but it is not a fully reliable method of preventing pregnancy.

The NHS Healthy Start vitamins for women contain 10mcg vitamin D along with 400mcg folic acid and some vitamin C and are ideal for breastfeeding mothers. Vegan mothers should have their diet assessed by a registered dietitian. They may need a supplement containing vitamin B12 and calcium in addition to vitamin D.



Losing weight while breastfeeding.

During pregnancy mothers accumulate a store of fat that is then used as a source of energy to produce breastmilk. Over several months of breastfeeding this extra fat store should gradually disappear. A small amount of extra weight may be due to extra fluid and will be lost when breastfeeding stops altogether.

Mothers who are overweight or obese should not embark on very low calorie diets while breastfeeding but should eat a balanced diet based on the 5 food groups to ensure a good balance of all the nutrients for themselves and their baby. Fatty/fried and sugary foods in Food Group 5 can be limited to a minimum by mothers who have gained excess weight during pregnancy or who were overweight at the beginning of pregnancy.

Once breastfeeding is established some regular physical activity of at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week will help weight loss and women can still breastfeed successfully and lose about 1 pound in weight each week



In summary, breastfeeding mothers should:

- ♦ ask for help and support with breastfeeding until they feel confident
- ♦ rest as much as possible in the early days of breastfeeding
- ♦ eat a healthy balanced diet including about 8 drinks per day
- ♦ take vitamin D supplements daily
- ♦ limit caffeinated drinks
- ♦ avoid alcohol altogether or limit it to 1 unit at least 2 hours before breastfeeding
- ♦ if overweight limit high fat, high sugar foods and include some regular physical activity once breastfeeding is established