

HEALTHY MUM HAPPY BABY

Being healthy may be the last thing on your mind as you adapt to the juggling act of life with a new baby. However, being a good Mum means looking after yourself as well as your little one, and this includes eating a well balanced diet. Eating the right food now will give you the experience and knowledge of what's best for your baby at that all important weaning stage too.

Eating for energy

During pregnancy your body stores of certain nutrients can become depleted. Eating a balanced diet based on the four main food groups shown in the Eatwell plate will help to replenish these stores and give you the energy you need to enjoy motherhood. Try to limit foods that are high in fat and sugar as these are low in essential nutrients.



Diet and breastfeeding

If you are breastfeeding, you need enough calories to provide energy for your baby as well as yourself. Some of these calories come from the fat stores laid down during pregnancy but the rest will come from your diet. When breastfeeding is fully established you will need an extra 300-400 calories per day, this is equivalent to:

- A large cheese and salad sandwich
- A large banana, glass of milk and small handful of nuts
- 2 yoghurts with fruit
- Fruit smoothie

Whilst it is tempting to go for an extra slice of cake it is best to go for nutrient rich snacks in your diet based around the 4 main food groups above.

Water is essential to the production of breast milk so make sure you have at least 8-12 cups of fluid per day. It is good idea to have a drink at hand whenever you are feeding. Calcium requirements also increase by 400mg/day during breastfeeding. Boost your calcium intake with an extra large glass of milk (330ml), 200g yoghurt or 50g cheese.

Caffeine and alcohol pass from your blood into breast milk. Try to avoid alcohol and if you do drink, limit to one unit of alcohol 2 hours or more before a breastfeed.

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

Your breast milk is also providing your baby with a supply of essential fatty acids needed for brain development. These are especially important as your baby cannot manufacture these and brain growth is particularly rapid during the first 2 years. Good food sources include oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and trout. Include these each week making sure you do not exceed 2 servings (a serve being 140g) a week because they can contain toxins. Large fish such as shark, swordfish and marlin should be avoided because they may contain small amounts of mercury.

Losing weight while breastfeeding

Breastfeeding should help you to lose the extra fat stores you laid down during pregnancy. If you have more weight to lose make sure you are still eating a well balanced diet based around the 4 main food groups, but limit foods that are high in fat and sugar. Once breastfeeding is established some regular physical activity of at least 30 minutes daily will help weight loss and mean that you can still breastfeed successfully and still lose 1 lb (0.5kg) per week.

Do I need vitamin supplements?

Don't forget that if you are planning another baby fairly soon you need to take folic acid supplements of 400mcg/day. Vitamin D is also important when you are breastfeeding and you may need to take a vitamin D supplement of 10mcg/day if you have insufficient exposure to the sun each day. An essential fatty acid supplement, called Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) may be beneficial if you do not eat oily fish, look for one that provides at least 200mg DHA/day.

If you need further help with your diet post-natally, a Registered Dietitian at The Food Clinic can provide expert individual advice. www.thefoodclinic.com.sg
Karen Wright registered dietician.