

## NUTRITION FOR THE BREASTFEEDING MOM

### *“Eat to Hunger”*

Breast milk is able to meet your baby’s nutritional needs even when you are not eating perfectly. However, a well-balanced diet is recommended to ensure the mother’s nutritional needs are being met with the appropriate vitamins and minerals. A breastfeeding diet should be very similar to the diet you followed throughout pregnancy with some slight adjustments. Most women who are breastfeeding need about 200 to 500 additional calories. The exact amount of calories will depend on a number of individual factors, such as weight, physical activity, metabolism, and how much you’re breastfeeding. Ask your doctor or dietitian to find out the right amount for you.

### *“Drink to Thirst”*

A good rule of thumb is to drink a glass of water anytime you are nursing. Drinking more does not necessarily mean more milk, but it will prevent you from feeling dehydrated.

### *Weight Loss*

Losing weight gradually, no more than 1.5 lbs per week, is appropriate. Moderate exercise is beneficial for breastfeeding mothers as it can help restore muscle strength, boost your energy level, improve your mood, and relieve stress.

### *Food Sensitivity*

Limit caffeinated beverages. If you think your baby may be having problems with the foods you’ve eaten, remember that it takes 4-6 hours after ingestion for a food to affect your breastmilk and it may take 2-10 days to get it out of your system. So, if your baby is showing sensitivities to milk it may take a few days after eliminating dairy products to start noticing improvements. Also, always practice safe food handling practices to minimize exposure to food borne illnesses.

### The Truth about Misconceptions

- Moms of all weights can produce adequate amounts of milk.
- Mom’s diet does not have to be “good” to produce “good milk”.
- The ability to produce enough milk is not related to breast size.
- Mom does not need to drink milk to produce milk.
- Failing to drink enough water will not affect the volume of your milk, but can contribute to maternal constipation.
- Drinking alcohol will decrease your milk supply.

### Helpful Hints

- Limit stress as that can affect milk supply.
- Breastfeed in a quiet area so mom and baby are minimally distracted.

*Vitamin and Mineral Supplements.*

It is recommended to either continue taking prenatal vitamins or start a multi-vitamin while breastfeeding. A supplement does not take the place of a well-balanced diet, but it can provide some extra assurance. The one supplement your baby may need is Vitamin D. Vitamin D is present in breast milk, but in low amounts. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 400 IU of Vitamin D per day.