

Nutrition Matters

Nutrition Services, Community and Health Services

Healthy eating while breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is an opportunity to continue the healthy eating habits you had while pregnant. Foods like raw sushi or deli meats no longer need to be avoided like during pregnancy.



Energy needs are higher when breastfeeding. In addition to following *Canada's Food Guide*, add 2-3 extra Food Guide Servings each day to help meet those higher energy needs. This would be equal to an extra snack during the day (e.g., ½ peanut butter sandwich and a small glass of milk or a yogurt with fresh fruit and nuts mixed in).

If you are trying to lose weight, choose low-fat, healthy foods more often. Healthy weight loss is about ½ - 1 pound (¼ - ½ kg) per week. Losing more means you may be eating too little which can lower your milk supply.

How you eat and drink can affect the amount of certain nutrients in your breastmilk. This handout highlights those nutrients and gives you tips and ideas around healthy eating.

Nutrients to get enough of:

Omega-3 fats

Omega-3 fats, especially docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), help your child's growth and development. Experts suggest eating at least 200 mg of DHA per day. You will get this amount if you eat at least two Food Guide Servings (about 5 oz) of fatty fish per week.

Sources of omega-3 with DHA include:

- Fatty fish - salmon, rainbow trout, herring and sardines (all low mercury)
- Omega-3 eggs fortified with DHA
- Milk, fortified with DHA
- Omega-3 soy beverage with algae
- DHA-enriched omega-3 margarine
- Fish oil and algae supplements

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is passed through breastmilk. To get enough vitamin D in your diet:

- Drink 2 cups (500 mL) of milk each day
- Eat fatty fish (e.g., salmon) twice a week
- Use non-hydrogenated margarine in place of butter
- Choose yogurt or other foods that have vitamin D added

In addition to the 400 IU supplement of vitamin D for your baby, you may need a vitamin D supplement also if you:

- Have dark skin pigmentation
- Don't drink milk or fortified soy beverage
- Get only minimal sun exposure due to covering your skin with clothes (e.g., wear long sleeves all year long)

Vitamin B₁₂

Vitamin B₁₂ is found in animal products including:

- Milk and alternatives (e.g., cheese, yogurt, fortified soy beverage)
- Meat (e.g., beef, fish)
- Eggs

If you aren't eating or drinking the above sources, you may need to take a vitamin B₁₂ supplement.

Folic acid (Folate)

Along with a healthy diet, take a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid daily. Good sources of folate include:

- Dark green vegetables (e.g., spinach, broccoli)
- Legumes (e.g., beans, lentils)
- Enriched products (e.g., white flour, pasta, cornmeal)

Fluid needs

Expect to drink about 12 cups (3 L) or more of fluids daily. Drink more if you are still thirsty but avoid forcing water down as drinking too much water can actually lower your milk supply.



Water, milk, 100% juice, fortified-soy beverage and broth-based soups are all good choices. Vegetables and fruit are high in water content so be sure to include 7-8 Food Guide Servings of these each day.

Nutrients to be cautious about

Trans fats

Since unhealthy trans fats are transferred through your breastmilk, limit or avoid them in your diet.

Even though there is a small amount of trans fat found naturally in milk products and meat (e.g., beef, lamb), it is the foods that are made with partially hydrogenated oils that should be avoided. They include certain:

- Shortening or margarines, or products made with them
- Packaged breaded foods
- Packaged snacks such as crackers and cookies
- Bakery products such as cakes, donuts, pastries, muffins and croissants

Read the Nutrition Facts label and compare products. If the products lists that it has trans fat (even as little as 0.5 gm per serving) or that it is made with partially hydrogenated oil, choose a different product.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 3/4 cup (100 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 80	
Fat 1 g	1 %
Saturated Fat 0 g + Trans Fat 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 2 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate 15 g	5 %
Fibre 3 g	12 %
Sugars 7 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A 1 %	Vitamin C 2 %
Calcium 1 %	Iron 3 %

Mercury

Mercury is an environmental toxin found in most fish, some higher than others. Too much mercury can harm your health and your baby's development.

Avoid high mercury fish including fresh or frozen tuna, swordfish, orange roughy, pickerel, sea bass, shark and tilefish. Instead, choose fish that are lower in mercury (e.g., salmon and herring).

Sweeteners

Products made with sweeteners usually offer little nutrition. The following sweeteners are safe to use in moderation:

- Acesulfame potassium (Sunett™)
- Aspartame (NutraSweet™, Equal™)
- Sucralose (Splenda™)

Avoid the following sweeteners:

- Cyclamates (Sugar Twin™)
- Saccharin (Hermesetas™)

Did you know spices and flavours like garlic can change the smell and taste of breastmilk? This may be a reason breastfed babies have fewer feeding problems as they get older.

Caffeine

Limit your caffeine intake to 300 mg per day. Since caffeine is passed into your breastmilk, high amounts of caffeine can cause your child to become irritable and have trouble sleeping.

Food or beverage	Serving size	Caffeine (mg)
Coffee, brewed	8 oz	60-150
Tea, leaf or bag	8 oz	40-80
Energy drinks, various	8.3 oz	46-88
Coke™ or Pepsi™, (includes diet)	12 oz	35-64
Iced tea, various	12 oz	11-34
Chocolate, dark or semi-sweet	1 oz	19-20
Chocolate, milk	1 oz	7
Fluid milk, chocolate flavour	8 oz	8
Coffee, decaf	8 oz	2-5
7-UP™ or Sprite™ (includes diet)	12 oz	0

Note: 12 oz = 355 mL, 8 oz = 237 mL, 1 oz = 28 gm

Be aware that coffee shops offer servings that are more than 8 oz. A “small” can be anywhere from 8-12 oz.

Herbs and herbal teas

Although you may have heard how some herbs increase breastmilk production, these recommendations are not supported by clinical studies. For example, Fenugreek may be safe to consume but evidence is lacking on its ability to improve breastmilk production.

Many herbs may be unsafe while breastfeeding. Before you take any herbs or herbal teas, check with your health care provider about the safety. If you have questions about breastfeeding or you would like to learn ways to increase your breastmilk production, contact a public health nurse at York Region Community and Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.

Did you know that gas producing foods will not cause your child to be gassy? Gas and fibre do not pass into breastmilk.

For more information

See some of our other handouts at www.york.ca/nutrition for more details about the nutrients in this handout as well as meal planning ideas:

- *A guide to eating fish for women, children and families*
- *Healthy eating on the go*
- *Healthy meals for fast-paced lives*
- *Herbal teas: are they safe during pregnancy and while breastfeeding?*
- *Moms can reach a healthy weight after pregnancy*
- *Omega-3: reel in the benefits*
- *The healthy eating and cookbook shelf*
- *Vitamin D and your baby*
- *Canada's Food Guide (Health Canada)*

You can also call *York Region Community and Health Services Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 or e-mail HC@york.ca to have the fact sheets listed above mailed to you.



You may have additional nutritional needs while breastfeeding and should talk to your health care provider or a registered dietitian if you:

- Have food allergies or intolerances
- Are younger than 18 years of age
- Have trouble affording enough food
- Are breastfeeding more than one child
- Are pregnant while breastfeeding
- Are vegetarian
- Have an eating disorder

Call *EatRight Ontario* at 1-877-510-5102 to speak to a registered dietitian about healthy eating for you and your family.

Quick meals and snack ideas for busy moms

Planning meals and snacks

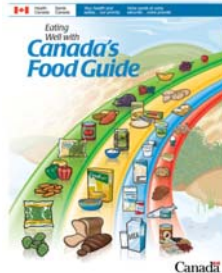
A quick way to make sure your meals and snacks are healthy is to include at least:

- Three of the four food groups at each meal
- Two of the four food groups at each snack

Canada's Food Guide

food groups include:

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives



Finding time to eat while caring for a baby can be hard. Try these quick and nutritious meal and snack ideas.

Breakfast ideas

- Peanut butter shake: blend 1 cup (250 mL) milk, 1 frozen sliced banana and 1 tsp vanilla. Add 1 tbsp peanut butter while blending. Blend until smooth
- Microwaved eggs: Crack 2 eggs in a mug. Beat, then microwave for 1-1 ½ minutes. Enjoy with toast and juice
- Yogurt, cantaloupe slices and a muffin
- Cheese omelette and whole wheat toast
- Instant oatmeal with milk and diced strawberries
- Toasted English muffin with melted cheese with a slice of watermelon
- Cold cereal with fruit and milk



Lunch and dinner ideas

- Bagel melt: place 2 slices of cheese between 1 sliced bagel and microwave or broil until cheese melts. Enjoy with fruit or vegetable sticks
- Turkey roll-up: place 2 oz (50 g) sliced turkey and a lettuce leaf on pita bread. Add a carrot stick and roll up
- Cottage cheese, fruit and a bran muffin
- Baked beans on toast with tomato slices
- Peanut butter and banana sandwich
- Salad with boiled egg or sliced meat. Add shredded cheese and enjoy with a whole wheat bun
- Macaroni and cheese dinner with added tuna and frozen peas
- Egg or salmon salad sandwich and carrot sticks
- Beef vegetable soup, cheese with crackers and pudding



Snack ideas

- Trail mix: mix your favourite nuts with dried fruit
- Vegetable sticks with hummus
- Apple slices with peanut butter
- Crackers and cheese
- Fresh fruit and vanilla yogurt
- Banana bread with almond butter
- Cheese stick rolled in sliced meat



With any of the meal or snack ideas, add a glass of milk or 100% juice for added nutrition.