

New parents: eating and drinking

By Child and Youth Health

- A healthy, nutritious diet will help you and your baby.
- Eating a variety of foods helps, as does drinking plenty of fluids.

Now that you're a new mum or dad, eating well is vital to help keep your energy up – even if it is hard to find the time.

For new mums especially, try to eat at least three times a day to make sure you get all the nutrients you need to recover from the birth (and to make milk for your baby if you are breastfeeding).

Tips for eating well for new mums and dads

- Eat a variety of foods each day.
- Eat plenty of breads and cereals (including whole grains, rice and pasta).
- Eat several different vegetables and fruits each day.
- Eat protein foods every day – meat, fish, chicken, eggs, cheese, legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils).
- Eat foods containing calcium every day (a lot of calcium from your body will go into breastmilk). Milk and dairy products (e.g. cheese, yoghurt and custards) are the easiest way to get calcium. You can also get calcium from soy milk that has had calcium added (check the label), tinned fish with bones (salmon and sardines), tofu, legumes, almonds and hummus, and smaller amounts from green vegetables.

For breastfeeding mums

Breastfeeding mothers don't need to eat a lot of extra food or any special foods. Your appetite and thirst will be a good guide. Drinking extra fluids will not increase your milk supply, but you do need enough fluids. Try to have a drink yourself each time you feed the baby.

There are many myths about foods that breastfeeding mothers should not eat for fear of upsetting the baby. Some mothers find that if they eat a lot of rich or spicy foods, or particular fruits or vegetables, their babies may be upset. Others find they can eat anything. So it is a matter of trial and error. If you find you need to avoid several foods from one of the groups listed above, check to be sure that you are still getting all the important nutrients.

Drugs, tobacco or medicines you take may reach your baby through your milk. Alcohol and nicotine pass freely into the milk.

According to research, cigarette smoking can affect the mother's milk supply and may cause tummy upsets in children, so mothers are advised to give up smoking or reduce their smoking as much as possible, especially during the hour before feeding.

Likewise, breastfeeding mothers are advised not to drink alcohol or to limit the amount to one drink, consumed just after breastfeeding. This allows the alcohol to be well metabolised before the next

feed.

Rated ★★★★★ 1 ratings

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