

Nutrition for a breastfeeding mother



New life circumstances, breastfeeding, tiredness, and mood swings can be challenging for new mothers. Eating regularly and adequately will help you recover from labour, keep you going, and make breastfeeding a success.

Try to eat as regularly as possible so you have enough energy to support breastfeeding and keep your energy levels up. **For most people, a cadence of eating every 3–4 hours, i.e. 4–6 times a day, is the best fit.** By eating clearly defined meals and snacks instead of eating a bit here and there, you can ensure that the food you eat is of high nutritional quality and variety. A regular cadence of meals also promotes oral health.

Check the fats you use, preferring soft fats through:

- choosing a vegetable spread with **a minimum fat content of 60 % for sandwiches and using vegetable oils or bottled margarine in cooking**
- **eating nuts in different varieties, as well as almonds,** about 2 tablespoons (30 g) a day
- using **oil-based salad dressing**
- eating **oily fish** 2 times a week.

Through these dietary choices your breast milk will also contain enough

of the fatty acids necessary for your baby. An intake of essential fatty acids is important for the development of your child's nervous system and vision.

As protein sources, **favour fish, poultry, vegetable protein products, and pulses.** The maximum total recommended intake of red meat and meat products is 350 g per week.

With dairy products, choose fat-free or low-fat options or plant-based alternatives to reduce your intake of saturated (“hard”) fats.

Include a portion of at least one vegetable, fruit, or berry at every meal or snack. It is recommended to eat at least a half-kilogram of these in total per day.

With cereal products, try to select whole-grain options, which are rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals. A high-fibre product contains at least 6 g of fibre per 100 g.

Wholegrain products and vegetables in the mother's diet will increase the amount of water-soluble vitamins, especially vitamins B and C, in breast milk.

Vitamin D supplementation is recommended for all breastfeeding women at 10 µg per day all year round. Discuss the need for any other supplements with your healthcare provider.

The additional energy required for breastfeeding depends on the amount of breast milk produced and the amount of fat stored in the mother's body. The average additional energy requirement is 500 kcal (see figure below) per day. In most cases, a breastfeeding mother will enjoy a good appetite and the amount of food she eats will naturally increase as needed. As your child starts to consume solid food and the amount of breast milk produced decreases, so does the need for more energy.



A snack to meet the additional energy needs of breastfeeding.

It is not necessary to avoid any foods in the diet during breastfeeding to prevent allergies in your child, and unnecessary restrictions may, in fact, serve to increase the risk of food allergy in your child.

Breastfeeding increases the need for fluids commensurate to the amount of breast milk produced.

Suitable drinks include water, skimmed milk and buttermilk, plant-based drinks, tea, as well as diluted juices with a low sugar content. Water is the best way to deal with thirst, especially when breastfeeding at night.

The safe intake limit for caffeine during breastfeeding is 200 mg per day, taking into account all sources of caffeine. A high intake of caffeine

may make your baby restless, as some of the caffeine is absorbed into breast milk.

Please avoid

- alcohol
- herbal drinks and infusions
- oilseeds (e.g. flax, pine, chia, hemp, sesame, pumpkin, poppy, and sunflower seeds) in large quantities
- false morel (*gyromitra esculenta*) mushrooms
- seaweed products, if their iodine content is unknown or if the product has a high iodine content.

Restrictions on the consumption of fish

- There are no restrictions on the amount of freshwater roach or farmed fish that you can eat.
- Fish, including wild salmon, trout, lamprey, or large specimens of Baltic herring (more than 19 cm in length before being gutted), caught in the Baltic Sea can be consumed once every two months.
- Fish caught in fresh water, including pikeperch, bream, whitefish, perch, pike, or vendace, can be consumed in amounts of up to two portions a week, alternating between species.
- You can eat pikeperch, bream, whitefish, perch, pike, or vendace caught in the Baltic Sea 3–4 times a month, alternating between species.

Updated 4/2025