

Breastfeeding - Mother's Diet and Alcohol Use

Definition

- Breastfeeding questions about mother's diet and alcohol use. Main concern is how much gets into breastmilk and could this affect the baby.

Health Information

Topics Covered

Go to the topic that relates to your question for advice:

1. Diet
2. Fish and mercury
3. Caffeine
4. Herbal products
5. Alcohol use

Care Advice

1. Foods for the Nursing Mom:

- **Foods.** Eat a diet that is varied and balanced. Choose foods that are fresh if you can. There is no specific diet that increases milk supply. Most foods are well tolerated if eaten in moderation. The effect on the baby of foods in the mother's diet (including chocolate) is overrated. Foods eaten while pregnant are most often well tolerated by the breastfed infant.
- **Gassy Foods.** Foods such as cabbage, broccoli, or beans produce gas in some people. If you feel gassy after eating them, your baby might, too. It should just last a short time. It also doesn't mean you need to stop eating them.
- **Honey.** Honey is safe for nursing moms to eat or to use for a cough. Botulism isn't passed through breast milk. So, honey is safe for moms no matter the age of the baby.
- **Vitamins.** Keep taking your prenatal vitamins while you breastfeed.
- Making milk burns 500 calories per day.

2. Fish and Mercury:

- Certain types of fish have higher levels of mercury. These should not be eaten while nursing. Reason: risk of mercury toxicity that can affect your baby.
- Fish to avoid: shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish. See www.fda.gov for full list.
- Common safe fish choices are salmon, shrimp, pollock, tilapia, cod, catfish and canned light tuna.
- Limit white (albacore) tuna and tuna steaks to one serving (6 ounces) a week.

3. Caffeine - Avoid Too Much:

- Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, energy drinks and soft drinks. Too much caffeine can cause restlessness, crying, even diarrhea in your baby.
- Limit caffeine drinks to two 8 ounces (480 mL) servings per day. (Max: 300 mg per day).
- The average cup of coffee contains about 150 mg of caffeine.

4. **Herbs - Use with Caution:**

- Herbs are sometimes suggested to help increase milk supply. But, there is a lack of research that support that they actually work.
- Ask your child's doctor before you use herbal products.
- The quality of herbal products isn't regulated which can pose a safety risk.
- They can interact with other needed drugs and cause side effects.

5. **Alcohol Use:**

- **One Drink.** An occasional glass of wine, a beer or a cocktail is safe. Limit alcohol to no more than 1 drink per day. Nurse your baby before you drink and wait at least 2 hours before nursing again. If you feel affected by the drink, pump and dump the milk.
- **More than 1 Drink in 2 Hours.** If you have more than 1 drink, you should pump and dump your milk. Do this for at least 8 hours or until you no longer feel affected by the alcohol. When the alcohol is cleared from your blood, it's also cleared from your milk.
- Too much alcohol can be harmful. It can cause drowsiness, interfere with your baby's motor development and affect your milk letdown.
- Drinking beer does not increase the milk supply.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your baby becomes sick
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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