



# London Health Sciences Centre

## Patient Information

### EATING WELL FOR BREASTFEEDING

Healthy eating will help you get all the nutrients you need while breastfeeding. Enjoy foods from each of the four food groups every day. Choose foods from at least **3 food groups** at each **meal** and at least **2 food groups** at each **snack**.

Women who are breastfeeding require **extra calories** and **nutrients** to give your body energy. The amount of extra food you need is about 2 to 3 additional food guide servings each day, about 500 calories. Your extra calories should contain some protein.

Include at least **7-8 servings of vegetables and fruit** each day. Variety is important. Vegetables and fruit are high in vitamins like folic acid, minerals and fibre. One serving is 1 piece of fruit or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of vegetables.

Have at least **2 servings of milk and alternatives** each day. Choose skim, 1%, or 2% milk, calcium fortified soy beverage, low fat yogurt and reduced fat cheese. These foods are high in calcium. One serving is 1 cup of milk, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup plain yogurt.

- **Calcium** helps you and your baby build strong bones and teeth. You also need **vitamin D** to help absorb the calcium. Vitamin D is found in milk, fortified soy beverages, fatty fish, and in some supplements. If you are not including vitamin D containing foods or supplements in your diet daily, talk with a registered dietitian.

Have at least **2 servings of meats and alternatives** daily to help meet your protein needs. Choose lean meats, poultry without skin, fish, eggs, tofu, lentils, dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds. These foods provide iron that is important for you and your baby. Try to include fish twice a week or consider taking a fish oil supplement.

Women are more likely to develop low iron levels when they are pregnant and this can continue after delivery. Talk to your doctor if you are worried that you are not getting enough.

**Include a folic acid supplement.** If you still have prenatal vitamins left, you can continue to take them and buy a regular multivitamin that contains folic acid afterwards.

Choose **high fibre grain products most often**. Foods higher in **fibre** are beneficial for preventing constipation and helping you feel full. Fibre is found in whole grains, as well as all fruits and vegetables.

**Get enough fluid.** Aim for 12 ½ cups (~3 L) of fluid each day. Milk, fortified soy beverage, water, juice, coffee, tea and soup are examples of fluid choices.

You can eat most foods that you enjoyed before your pregnancy. However, it is recommended to limit caffeine and herbal teas. Talk to your health care provider about alcohol while breastfeeding.

Health Canada recommends a maximum of 300mg of caffeine per day when breastfeeding. 1 cup of coffee (250 mL or 8oz) has 150 mg and 1 cup of tea has 50 mg of caffeine.

If you have any unique dietary needs, such as vegetarian, mother of multiples, teen mother, etc, contact a registered dietitian at [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca).

Adapted from Dietitians of Canada – PEN 2018