

NGĀ KAI TOTIKA MĀ TE ŪKAIPŌ

# Eating for Healthy Breastfeeding Women



***By choosing to breastfeed, you are providing your baby with the ideal food – it is warm, clean, safe, nutritious and free.***

Breastfeeding gets easier with practice.

- Start breastfeeding your baby soon after birth.
- When you start to breastfeed, make sure that your baby drinks the colostrum – this is the first fluid that flows from the breast. Colostrum is very good for the baby.
- Be patient while you learn.
- Ask for help if you have a question or need some support.
- Breastfeed to your baby's hunger cues.



It is recommended that your baby is fed only on breast milk for around the first 6 months of his or her life.

If breastfeeding is not going well, easily or pleasurably, seek skilled assistance sooner rather than later. Your lead maternity carer (LMC), your Well Child nurse, La Leche League or a lactation consultant can give you advice and support. For more information, see [www.breastfeeding.org.nz](http://www.breastfeeding.org.nz) or [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz) for breastfeeding-specific resources.

During the time that you are breastfeeding, keep following the healthy eating guidelines in this book.

Some women may need special advice from a dietitian about eating. Ask your LMC to arrange for you to see a dietitian if you:

- find that certain foods that you eat are affecting your baby
- have a medical condition that affects your eating, such as diabetes
- eat very little or have a history of eating problems
- are vegetarian or vegan
- are 18 years old or younger.

# Food for a Healthy Breastfeeding Mother and Baby

***Eat a variety of healthy foods every day from each of the four main food groups below:***

1. vegetables and fruit
  2. breads and cereals (wholegrain is best)
  3. milk and milk products (reduced- or low-fat milk is best)
  4. legumes, nuts, seeds, fish and other seafood, eggs, poultry (eg, chicken), or red meat with the fat removed.
- Limit your intake of foods that are high in fat (especially saturated fat), salt and sugar (see the section on page 9).
  - If using salt, choose iodised salt.
  - Take care when buying, preparing, cooking and storing food so that the food is as safe as possible to eat.
  - Drink plenty of fluids each day, especially water and reduced- or low-fat milk.
  - Drinking alcohol is not recommended for mothers who are breastfeeding.
  - Keep a healthy weight by eating well and being physically active each day (unless advised not to be physically active).

***Traditional Māori and Pacific foods can be healthy choices.***



# Eat a Variety of Healthy Foods

**Choose a variety of healthy foods from the following four food groups each day.**

## 1. Vegetables and Fruit

Vegetables and fruit provide carbohydrates (sugar and starch), fibre, vitamins and minerals and are low in fat.

- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit.
- Enjoy fresh, well-washed vegetables and fruit or frozen or canned varieties. Steaming or microwaving vegetables is best. Go easy on butter or margarine.
- Include vegetables and fruit in a variety of colours.
- Limit juice and dried fruit intake because these foods have a high sugar content.

Eat **at least nine** servings per day of vegetables and fruit – **at least seven** servings of vegetables and **two** servings of fruit.



### Serving size examples

#### Vegetables

- ½ a medium potato or similar sized piece of kūmara, taewa (Māori potato), yam, taro, cassava, or green banana (75 g)
- ½ cup cooked vegetables, eg, pūhā, watercress, silverbeet, taro leaves, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, broccoli, cabbage, corn, carrot or peas (75 g)
- 1 cup salad or bean sprouts
- 1 medium tomato (75 g)

#### Fruit

- 1 apple, pear, banana or orange (150 g)
- 2 small apricots or plums
- 1 cup diced or canned fruit (drained and with no added sugar), eg, pineapple (150 g)
- 1 cup frozen fruit, eg, mango, berries

## 2. Breads and Cereals

These provide carbohydrates (sugar and starch), fibre, and nutrients such as B vitamins and minerals.

- Eat plenty of breads and cereals, including rice, pasta, breakfast cereals and other grain products.
- Choose wholegrain varieties because they provide extra nutrients and fibre. They also help prevent constipation.

Choose **at least nine** servings of breads and cereals each day.

### Serving size examples

- ½ medium roll (40 g)
- 1 medium slice rēwena bread (30 g)
- 1 slice bread (40 g)
- ⅔ cup cereal flakes
- ¼ cup muesli (30 g)
- ½ cup cooked cereal, eg, porridge (120 g)
- ½ cup cooked pasta
- ½ cup cooked rice
- 3 crispbreads or crackers (35 g)



### 3. Milk and Milk Products

Women who are breastfeeding need milk and milk products as sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, especially calcium and iodine.

- Choose reduced- or low-fat milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- Milk and milk products provide New Zealanders with most of their calcium. If you do not eat these foods or eat very little of them, ask your LMC or Well Child nurse about other calcium sources.
- Calcium is also found, in lower amounts, in foods such as wholegrain bread, broccoli, canned salmon, canned sardines, spinach, baked beans and tofu.
- If you are drinking non-dairy milks, eg, soy, oat or nut milk, choose one that is calcium-fortified (check the label).
- If you follow a vegan diet, you will need to check that your non-dairy milk has vitamin B12 in it.

Have **at least two** servings each day of milk or milk products, preferably reduced- or low-fat products.

#### Serving size examples

- 1 large glass milk (250 mL)
- 2 slices hard cheese (40 g)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup or 1 pottle yoghurt (200 g)
- 1 large glass calcium-fortified soy milk (250 mL)



## 4. Legumes, Nuts, Seeds, Fish and other Seafood, Eggs, Poultry (eg, Chicken), or Red Meat with the Fat Removed

These foods give you protein, iron, zinc and other nutrients.

- Choose lean meats, chicken and seafood.
- Iron is important for healthy blood.
- Iron in lean meats, chicken and seafood is absorbed well by the body. Eggs, cooked dried beans, peas and lentils, and nuts and seeds also contain iron, but the iron is not as easily absorbed.
- Include foods rich in vitamin C with your meals to help absorb iron. Fresh vegetables and fruit, especially taro leaves (cooked), broccoli, tomatoes, oranges, kiwifruit, mangoes and pineapple, are rich sources of vitamin C. This is especially important for vegetarian and vegan women, who may find it hard to get enough iron.
- Seafood and eggs are also useful sources of iodine (see the Iodine and Iodine Deficiency section on page 12).

Choose **at least two** servings from this group each day.

### Serving size examples

- 2 slices cooked meat (about 65 g), eg, beef, pork or lamb
- ½ cup mince or casserole (65 g)
- ½ medium steak (65 g)
- 2 drumsticks or ½ chicken breast (80 g)
- 1 large piece of fish (100 g), eg, warehou or eel
- 1 medium, freshly cooked pāua
- small can of canned fish, eg, skipjack or albacore tuna, sardines, salmon or mackerel (90 g)
- 6 freshly cooked mussels (100 g)
- 2 large (2 x 60 g) eggs
- 1 cup canned or cooked dried beans, eg, bean salad or lentil dish (150 g)
- ⅓ cup nuts or seeds
- ¾ cup tofu (170 g)

## Drink Plenty of Fluids Every Day

***Use your thirst as a guide. Aim for ten cups of fluid each day. Try to have a drink with each breastfeed.***

Extra fluid may be needed during hot weather, after activity, or if you are vomiting or constipated.

Water or reduced- or low-fat milk are the best choices.

Caffeine is transferred into breast milk and may lead to irritability and poor sleeping patterns in your baby, especially when the caffeine is consumed heavily. Limit drinks containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea and cola drinks. Have no more than six cups of tea or instant coffee (or three 'single' espresso-type coffees or one 'double' espresso-type coffee) each day.

Be cautious about drinking herbal teas. Discuss this with your LMC or Well Child nurse.

Avoid drinking tea with meals. The tannins in tea mean you will not absorb the iron in the meal as well as you could.

Limit soft drinks, flavoured waters, fruit drinks, cordials and diet drinks because these are low in nutrients and may be high in sugar. Avoid energy drinks and energy shots.



# Choose and Prepare Foods Low in Fat, Salt and Sugar

***The best way to meet your extra needs is to choose foods from the four food groups. These are good sources of fibre, vitamins and minerals.***

When shopping, read labels and look for foods that are lower in fat (especially in saturated fat), salt and sugar. If using salt, choose iodised salt.

***To cut down on your intake of fat (especially saturated fat), salt and sugar:***

- choose polyunsaturated or monounsaturated margarine or lower fat table spreads (fortified with vitamin D) rather than butter or dripping, and spread thinly
- choose foods rich in polyunsaturated fat and omega-3, including green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds, oily fish (canned tuna, sardines, salmon, mackerel; fresh wharhou, eel) and oils (soybean, canola, flaxseed and walnut oils)
- choose lean meats; trim off any fat, remove skin from chicken before or after cooking, skim fat off stews or off the top of boil-ups and eat more grilled, boiled or steamed fish
- reduce intake of sausages or processed meats, which can be high in fat; if eating these foods, grill rather than fry them
- when cooking, choose to grill, steam, microwave, boil or bake foods, without adding fat
- eat meals without adding extra salt
- choose foods with no added sugar.

Many fast foods, takeaways and processed snacks are high in fat, salt and/or sugar. These include foods such as fish and chips, fried chicken, hamburgers, pies, chocolate bars, muesli bars, chippies, doughnuts, cream cakes, lollies, fruit leathers, cordials and soft/fizzy drinks. Choose these foods and drinks only occasionally.

## Aim for a Healthy Weight

***Breastfeeding can help you lose some of the weight you gained during pregnancy. A slow weight loss over the time of breastfeeding is best.***

Dieting is not recommended.

Your body needs more energy (kilojoules or calories) when you are breastfeeding, so your appetite will increase.

- Choose foods from the four food groups for your extra energy needs.
- Eat regularly, starting the day with breakfast.
- Include snacks from the four food groups.

## Snack Ideas

- **Sandwiches:** Use a variety of fillings such as banana, yeast extract spread, cheese, cottage cheese, baked beans, jam or peanut butter. Try different bases, for example, wholegrain bread rolls, rēwena bread, crackers, rice cakes, crumpets, pita bread, muffins and baked bread fingers.
- **Vegetable sticks:** Keep these in the fridge. Serve with cottage cheese or peanut butter.





- **Fruit:** Try fresh, canned (unsweetened), frozen or fruit, served whole, cut up with yoghurt or in a smoothie.
- **Cereals:** Choose cereals low in fat and sugar, for example, porridge, untoasted muesli, cornflakes, bran flakes and wheat biscuits.
- **Popcorn:** Pop using a little oil or margarine or use a microwave. Go easy on the salt.
- **Reduced- or low-fat milk products:** Try yoghurt, cubes of cheese, reduced- or low-fat milk and milk puddings (eg, creamed rice).

## Being Active

- Being physically active will help you keep a healthy weight and maintain muscle tone. Unless advised otherwise, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. This could include brisk walking, swimming, or any activity that is comfortable for you and leaves you with enough breath to hold a conversation.
- Your LMC or physiotherapist can show you exercises that help re-strengthen your stomach, back and pelvic floor muscles.

## Take Time Out for Yourself

It is important to get the rest you need and to eat well. Being tired or stressed can delay your milk letdown.

Most new mothers feel tired for the first few months and benefit from the support of others.

- Try resting while your baby sleeps during the day.
- Rest when your body tells you it is tired.
- Ask friends, family or your local community or church group for support.
- Your LMC, Well Child nurse or community health worker from a marae-based clinic is there to help.

Talking about how you feel and sharing jobs with other people can make all the difference. Whānau/family and friends can help by bringing meals, helping with cleaning and washing, and watching your baby and other children so that you can have a break.

If you need to leave your baby, you can express milk so that others can feed the baby.

Take time out for yourself. Going for a walk provides exercise, fresh air and a time to relax.



## Iodine and Iodine Deficiency

Iodine is an essential nutrient required in small amounts to support normal growth and development including normal brain development. It is important that babies receive enough iodine. Requirements for iodine increase during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Even with a well-balanced diet, it is difficult to get enough iodine from food alone.

Choose foods that are important sources of iodine and take a daily iodine-only tablet during the time that you are breastfeeding.



Important sources of iodine in foods include well-cooked seafoods, milk, eggs, some cereals, and commercially made bread (excluding organic and unleavened bread because they are not required to be made with iodised salt).

If you use salt, choose iodised salt.

In addition:

- Take one 0.150 milligram (mg)/150 microgram (mcg or µg) iodine-only tablet daily during the time that you are breastfeeding.
- The recommended registered tablet can be purchased at pharmacies, with the cost reduced when prescribed by your LMC.

For further information, contact a health professional such as your LMC, dietitian, practice nurse or pharmacist.

Supplements containing seaweed, kelp and iodine are not recommended for women who are breastfeeding because the iodine content and quality of the supplements is variable.

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is needed for strong bones and joints. While it is found in some foods in the diet, the main source of vitamin D in New Zealand is sunlight. Vitamin D is made in the body through the action of sunlight on the skin. Examples of foods that contain vitamin D are fresh and canned oily fish (tuna, sardines, salmon, herring, mackerel, warehou, eel), eggs and vitamin D-fortified yoghurts, milk, dairy desserts and margarines.

Some sun exposure is recommended so that your body can make vitamin D.

Between September and April sun protection is recommended (shade, clothing coverage, and a hat that shades the face and neck, sunscreen, sunglasses), especially between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm. A daily walk or some other form of outdoor physical activity in the early morning or late afternoon is recommended.

Between May and August some sun exposure is important. A daily walk or another form of outdoor physical activity in the hours around noon, with face, arms, and hands exposed is recommended.

If you are concerned about not getting enough vitamin D, discuss this with a health practitioner such as your doctor (GP), dietitian, LMC or Well Child nurse.



## Supplements

Choosing a variety of foods from the four food groups is very important, especially during the time that you are breastfeeding. Vitamin, mineral and health supplements should only be taken in consultation with your LMC or GP. For most women who are breastfeeding, supplements other than the iodine-only tablet should not be necessary.

Using vitamin and mineral supplements will not give you extra energy.

## Allergies

Breastfeeding women do not need to avoid foods associated with allergy, unless they have an allergy to the food themselves. Avoiding foods while pregnant or breastfeeding does not help prevent allergies in the baby.

If you think that a certain food that you are eating is affecting your baby, discuss this with your LMC or Well Child nurse.

## Colic

Inconsolable crying in an otherwise healthy baby can be a sign of colic. Colic seems to have more than one cause.

A crying baby may also have an illness, so it is important to have this checked by a doctor or Well Child nurse.

Cutting out some foods you are eating may not stop the colic, and you may be cutting out foods that you and your baby need.

Colic may be related to a feeding problem. It may help to have your breastfeeding assessed by your LMC, Well Child nurse or lactation consultant.

If cow's milk or any other food is removed from your diet, seek advice from a dietitian to ensure that you and your baby are not missing out on important nutrients.

## Alcohol

### ***Alcohol is not recommended.***

It is best to avoid alcohol during the time that you are breastfeeding because it passes very quickly into breast milk and can therefore negatively affect your baby. This is especially important during the first month following your baby's birth. If you choose to drink alcohol, the limit should be no more than an occasional one to two standard drinks. Binges of alcohol should be avoided.

If you choose to drink alcohol, you can minimise the risk of exposing your baby to it by waiting until the alcohol level in your breast milk has dropped. Wait for at least two hours after one standard drink before breastfeeding again. The longer the time between drinking alcohol and breastfeeding, the less chance it will affect your baby.

## Smoking

### ***Be smokefree and keep your baby smokefree.***

Smoking can reduce the amount of milk you make.

If you do choose to smoke:

- never smoke during breastfeeding
- never smoke in the same room as your baby – smoke outside if possible.

Some people think smoking is an easy way to lose weight. This is not true.

## Medication

### ***Seek advice about taking medication.***

Use medication only as advised by your LMC or GP.

Taking any other sort of drugs, for example, illicit drugs or party pills, is not recommended for mothers who are breastfeeding.

## For more information

**You and your baby are entitled to receive free Well Child care in accordance with the Well Child Tamariki Ora National Programme. This includes advice about and support with your own and your baby's nutrition requirements.**

**This programme is delivered by your LMC from conception until 2-6 weeks after the birth of your baby. From 2-6 weeks onwards, your Well Child provider (Plunket, public health service, Māori or Pacific provider) will provide this care.**

**If you need further advice or information, talk to your LMC or Well Child provider.**

### *Other organisations for information:*

Healthline 0800 611 116

Lactation consultant (IBCLC)

La Leche League for breastfeeding support and information

NZ Multiple Birth Association, PO Box 1258, Wellington

Parents Centre New Zealand

Dietitian at local public health unit

### *For website information*

Ministry of Health [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

Health Education resources [www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz)

[www.raisingchildren.org.nz](http://www.raisingchildren.org.nz)



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