

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 starting to breastfeed, make sure your baby drinks the colostrum – this is the first fluid that flows from the breast. Colostrum is very good for baby.
- Be patient while you learn.
- Ask for help if you have a question or need some support.
- Breastfeed to your baby's demands.



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 midwife, your Well Child nurse, La Leche League or a lactation consultant can give you advice and support. For more information see [www.breastfeeding.co.nz](http://www.breastfeeding.co.nz) or [www.healthed.govt.nz](http://www.healthed.govt.nz) for breastfeeding-specific resources.

While breastfeeding, keep following the healthy eating guidelines in this book.

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

- find that certain foods you eat are affecting your baby
- have a medical condition affecting 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. lean meat, chicken, seafood, eggs, legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Limit your intake of fatty (especially saturated fat), salty and sugary foods and drinks by:
    - preparing foods with little added fat, salt and sugar
    - when shopping, reading labels and looking for foods that are lower in fats (especially saturated fat), salt and sugar. New Zealand women get most of their saturated fats from butter, milk, baked products, cheese, hot chips and meat.
  - 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.
  - It is best not to drink alcohol while 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 of a variety of colours.
- Limit juice and dried fruit intake because these foods have a high sugar content.

*Eat **at least six** servings per day of vegetables and fruit – **at least four** servings of vegetables and **two** servings of fruit. Only **one** serving of juice or **one** serving of dried fruit counts towards your total number of servings for the day.*



### Serving size examples

#### Vegetables

- 1 medium piece of potato, kūmara, pumpkin, carrot, taro, kamokamo or yam (135 g)
- ½ cup cooked vegetables, eg, pūhā, watercress, silverbeet, taro leaves, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, broccoli, cabbage, corn or peas (50–80 g)
- ½ cup salad or bean sprouts (60 g)
- 1 tomato (80 g)

#### Fruit

- 1 apple, pear, banana or orange (130 g)
- 2 small apricots or plums (100 g)
- ½ cup fresh fruit pieces, eg, pineapple or mango (120 g)
- ½ cup stewed fruit (135 g)
- 1 cup fruit juice (250 g)
- 25 g dried fruit, eg, 2 tablespoons of raisins or 3 dates

## 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 seven** servings of breads and cereals each day.

### Serving size examples

- 1 roll (50 g)
- 1 muffin (80 g)
- 1 medium slice rēwena bread (30 g)
- 1 medium slice bread (26 g)
- 1 cup cornflakes (30 g)
- ½ cup muesli (55 g)
- ½ cup cooked cereal, eg, porridge (130 g)
- 1 cup cooked pasta (150 g)
- 1 cup cooked rice (150 g)
- 1 cup cassava, sago or tapioca (150 g)
- 2 plain sweet biscuits (14 g)



### 3. Milk and Milk Products

Breastfeeding women 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 doctor, midwife or Plunket nurse about other calcium sources.
- Calcium is also found in such foods as wholegrain bread, broccoli, canned salmon, canned sardines, spinach, baked beans and tofu, but in lower amounts.
- If you are drinking soy milk, choose one that is calcium-fortified (check the label).
- If you follow a vegan diet, check that your soy milk has vitamin B12 added as well.

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

#### **Serving size examples**

- 1 large glass milk (250 g)
- 1 pottle yoghurt (150 g)
- 2 slices cheese (40 g)
- 1 large glass calcium-fortified soy milk (250 ml)



## 4. Lean Meats, Chicken, Seafood, Eggs, Cooked Dried Beans, Peas and Lentils, Nuts and Seeds

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 well absorbed by the body. Eggs, cooked dried beans, peas and lentils, 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 cooked taro leaves, 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 section on page 13).

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

### **Serving size examples**

- 2 slices cooked meat (approx 100 g), eg, beef, pork or lamb
- ¾ cup mince or casserole (195 g)
- 1 medium steak (120 g)
- 2 drumsticks or 1 chicken leg (110 g)
- 1 medium piece of cooked fish (100 g), eg, warehou or eel
- small can of canned fish, eg, tuna, sardines, salmon or mackerel (90 g)
- 1 medium, freshly cooked pāua (120 g)
- 8 medium, freshly cooked mussels (80 g)
- 1 egg (50 g)
- ¾ cup canned or cooked dried beans, eg, bean salad or lentil dish (135 g)
- ½ cup nuts or seeds

## 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.

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 doctor, midwife or Well Child nurse, for example, Plunket nurse.

Tea should not be drunk 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 as these are low in nutrients and may be high in sugar. Avoid energy drinks.



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

***The best way to meet your extra needs while breastfeeding 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 saturated fat), salt and sugar. If using salt, choose iodised salt.

***Prepare foods low in fat (especially saturated fat), salt and sugar by:***

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

Many fast foods, takeaways and processed snacks are high in fat, salt and/or sugar. These include such foods 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 return to your pre-pregnancy weight. 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 according to your appetite.
- Eat regularly, starting the day with breakfast.
- Include snacks from the four food groups.

## Snack Ideas

- **Sandwiches** – different fillings such as banana, yeast extract spread, cheese, cottage cheese, baked beans, jam or peanut butter. Try a variety of 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 dried, served whole, cut up with yoghurt or in a smoothie.
- **Cereals** – choose cereals low in fat and sugar, for example porridge, untoasted muesli, corn flakes, 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, for example creamed rice.

Keeping 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 everyday. This could include brisk walking, swimming, or any activity that is comfortable for you and leaves you with enough breath to hold a conversation. Choose activities that match your level of fitness.

A physiotherapist can show you exercises that will 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 doctor, Well Child nurse or community health worker from a marae-based clinic are 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, by helping with cleaning and washing and by watching your baby and other children so you can have a break.

If you need to leave your baby, you can express milk so 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. Iodine is essential for normal brain development. It is important that unborn babies and infants receive enough iodine. Requirements for iodine increase during pregnancy and breastfeeding. From September 2009 all bread sold in New Zealand (except organic and unleavened) contains iodised salt instead of non-iodised salt. This provides extra iodine in the diet of most New Zealanders.

Important sources of iodine in foods are: well cooked seafoods, milk, eggs, some cereals, seameal custard and fortified bread. If salt is used, choose iodised.



## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is needed for strong bones and joints as well as healthy muscle and nerve activity. 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 margarine.

It is important to balance being in the sun with protecting yourself from potential harm such as skin cancer.

Try to spend some time in the sun everyday but never let yourself get sunburnt. During daylight saving months (September to April) avoid being in the sun between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm. If you are in the sun during this time be 'sunsmart'. Wear a sunhat, protective clothing, sunglasses and SPF 30+ sunscreen.

Some women are at particular risk of not making enough vitamin D in their skin from the sun. This includes women who:

- have dark skin (their skin takes a longer time to make vitamin D in the sun)
- stay inside most of the time
- keep their skin covered for religious or cultural reasons.

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



## Supplements

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

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

## Allergies

Some substances from food may pass into breast milk, but it is not clear whether these cause allergies in the baby.

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

Exclusive breastfeeding (breastmilk only) for around six months is a good step towards preventing allergies in your baby.

## 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 midwife, 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 is not recommended***

It is best to avoid alcohol because it passes very quickly into breast milk, and so can negatively affect your baby. Continue avoiding alcohol when breastfeeding, especially 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. After drinking alcohol wait between two to three hours before resuming breastfeeding. If your baby needs to be fed during this time she/he can be given expressed breast milk that is free from alcohol. It may be necessary to express breast milk for comfort and to maintain milk supply in this two to three hour period. In this case, the alcohol-exposed milk should be discarded.

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

Smoking can reduce the amount of milk you make.

If you do choose to smoke:

- never smoke while 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.

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

Use medication only as advised by your LMC.

Taking any other sort of drugs, for example, illicit drugs or party pills, is not recommended while 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.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)

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



ISBN 978-0-478-19325-1 (print)  
ISBN 978-0-478-19326-8 (online)

New Zealand Government