A word on allergies

As a general rule, no food should be eliminated from your diet but if you think that a food might be affecting your baby and is unsettled, best to talk to your family doctor. Mothers with a history of allergy benefit from avoiding any of the foods that are commonly associated with allergy such as cow’s milk, nuts and corn, shellfish, wheat and citrus fruits. Try eliminating any of these foods, one at a time, and see if your baby’s condition improves. It may take up to ten days for it to clear from your baby’s system. The good news is that breastfeeding lessens your baby’s chance of developing a sensitivity or allergy towards these foods later in life.

Caffeine may cause your baby to become irritable and sleepless. Reducing your intake of coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate may reduce your baby’s irritability.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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How often do I need to feed my baby?

Ideally breastfeeding should be on demand for the first few days, whenever and as long as your baby wants. In the first 24 – 48 hours babies do not tend to feed very often but then become quite demanding for a day or two to catch-up. Following this feeding pattern, breastfeeding can be frequent during the early weeks. It is calculated that your baby requires at least 6 feeds in 24 hours; although more often than not, young babies tend to feed more frequently. Your baby can feed even up to 14 times in 24 hours.

My baby is having a bowel movement every 3 days. Is my baby constipated?

There is a wide variation in bowel movements of breastfed babies. These vary from ten times a day to once a week. Your baby is unlikely to be constipated provided there is an adequate number of wet nappies (about 6 wet nappies in 24 hours once milk supply comes in, i.e. baby is feeding well) and it is gaining adequate weight and the consistency of the stools is yellowish, rather loose and soft. When bowel movements are less frequent, they should be abundant.

Do I need to change breasts during a feed?

No. At the start of a feed the milk does not contain much fat. This type of milk is known as foremilk and it makes milk thinner. As the feed progresses, the fat content of human milk increases and is known as hindmilk. Hindmilk satisfies your baby’s hunger. When your baby drops your breast spontaneously appearing satisfied, offer your second breast, which may or may not be accepted.

What should I eat when breastfeeding?

You should keep on eating a varied, well-balanced diet in the right proportions that includes the following:

- At least five portions of varied vegetables and fruit per day
- Sterchy foods such as wholemeal bread, rice, pasta and potatoes. These should always accompany each of the main meals. Choose wholemeal or wholegrain varieties for plenty of fibre (roughage). Fibre can also be obtained by consuming legumes (beans, peas and lentils)
- Foods such as lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs and legumes. It is good to eat one-two portions of fish a week, including some oily fish
- Milk and dairy products as these contain calcium and are a source of protein too
- Drink plenty of fluids especially water; it is wise to have a small bottle of water when you are breastfeeding

Here are some ideas for a healthy snack to give you energy and strength:

- Fresh fruit (1 medium sized fruit is one portion)
- Bean-dip or hummus with vegetable sticks or wholemeal bread
- Vegetable and bean soups
- A small tub of yoghurt
- Two slices of wholemeal bread with tuna, tomato and green salad
- A small amount of cheese or fromage frais with e.g. apricot, figs or prunes
- Baked potato and a salad
- A glass of milk or a glass of freshly squeezed seasonal fruit juice
- Fortified unsweetened wincereal cereal (35-45g) with milk
- To find more information on food portion-sizes, you may wish to refer to our guidance booklet ‘Healthy eating for a healthy weight!’

Do I need to give extra fluids in between breastfeeding?

Breast milk contains all the fluids a baby needs even in very hot weather. Juices and teas are not required before six months even if packets state otherwise.

Is nipple soreness normal?

Some nipple soreness is normal in the first few days but there should be no signs of damaged skin or bleeding. This would suggest the baby is not being well positioned at the breast.

How can I tell if my baby is latched-on properly?

Comfortable seating: Comfortable seating in an armchair enables you to have your feet firm on the ground whilst keeping your back straight. Sit or lie in a comfortable position prior to ‘latching-on’ your baby to your breast.

Positioning of your baby: Your baby’s shoulders and chest should be turned towards the breast. Your baby’s nose should be level with your nipple, then tease your baby’s lips with your fingers and as your baby opens the mouth wide, bring your baby towards it. Your baby should have a mouthful of your breast. Check whether your baby is sucking effectively or simply comfort-sucking on your nipple. Always bring your baby to your breast; never take your breast to your baby. Once latched you will see some areola. (a point on the breast above the nipple (the brown circle surrounding the nipple) by your baby’s upper lip but you should see much less, near the bottom lip.

Check list for breastfeeding your infant successfully

- Good Attachment
  - More areola should be visible above baby’s mouth
  - Baby’s mouth should be wide open
  - Baby’s lower lip should be turned out
  - Baby’s chin should be touching your breast

- Effective Sucking
  - Slow deep sucking, occasionally pausing

- Good Position
  - Baby’s body should be straight (not bent or twisted)
  - Baby should be facing breast, start with nose to nipple (looking up at mother’s eyes)
  - Baby’s body should be close to mother’s body
  - Baby’s whole body should be supported (not just the head, or the bottom)

My baby is 4 days old. Why have my breasts become very uncomfortable?

This normal discomfort means that your milk has come in. It usually lasts for around 3 days after which your breast becomes softer and comfortable. Engagement occurs when the breast becomes more hard, like a stone, and is very painful. It can be the result of giving bottles at the stage when the mature milk comes in or by abruptly stopping breastfeeding. Some mothers may even experience engagement as a result of irregular breastfeeding times. The best relief occurs with feeding your baby and then applying warm and cold compresses to your breast between feeds. Expressing small quantities of milk, approx 10cc, whenever your breast feels painful, relieves it and keeps your nipple and areola soft so that your baby can form a teat for feeding.