

Ten steps to healthy eating for breastfeeding women

1. **Eat a variety of foods each day.** This means including plenty of breads and cereals (especially wholegrain varieties), rice and pasta, and fruit and vegetables; moderate amounts of lean meat (or alternatives) and reduced-fat dairy foods (or alternatives).
2. **Include more protein-rich foods in your diet.** Protein-rich foods include meat, chicken, fish, legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils), nuts and seeds, and reduced-fat dairy foods.
3. **Eat foods containing calcium.** Choose reduced-fat milk and other dairy foods – or alternatives like soy beverages with added calcium or tinned fish with bones (like salmon and sardines).
4. **Take an iodine supplement.** Health authorities recommend all breastfeeding women take an iodine supplement (150 micrograms) each day.
5. **Snack smart.** If you're hungrier than usual, try healthy snacks such as fruit, reduced-fat yoghurt, wholegrain crackers with low-fat cheese, raisin toast, a handful of nuts or a boiled egg.
6. **Make sure you have plenty to drink.** Many breastfeeding mums aim to have a drink at each feed time – and water is the best choice. Check the colour of your urine as a guide to whether you're drinking enough – it should be pale (not dark) yellow in colour.
7. **Watch 'empty calories'.** It can be tempting to fill up on foods like cakes, biscuits and chocolates. These foods provide energy (kilojoules), but not the extra nutrients your body needs while breastfeeding.
8. **Avoid fad diets.** It is normal to store extra fat during pregnancy – and tempting to want to lose it quickly once your baby is born! But fad diets are not a long-term solution. It is best to lose any extra kilos gradually through healthy eating and exercise. A weight loss of up to half a kilo per week is safe for breastfeeding mothers.
9. **It is safest to avoid alcohol when breastfeeding.** If you do have a drink, breastfeed before drinking. A standard drink (such as a 100mL glass of wine or a can/stubbie of mid-strength beer) will take about two hours to clear from your body.
10. **Get the right support.** An Accredited Practising Dietitian can check that you are eating a good balance of nutrients for both you and your baby. To find an APD in your local area, visit www.daa.asn.au

