

Healthy Pregnancy Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can be very beneficial to you and your baby. Breast milk is the best food for your baby during their first year of life. You should discuss breastfeeding with your provider as early as possible in your pregnancy. This includes education and any potential health limitations you may have (medications, surgeries, etc.) so you can make an informed decision about breastfeeding and be ready when your baby is born.

An average of 500 extra calories are needed per day while breastfeeding, although this number depends on how much you breastfeed. Extra calories should come from a variety of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, lean protein, low-fat dairy and whole grains. Adequate hydration also is very important while breastfeeding.

Health Benefits of Breastfeeding

- Provides antibodies to help baby fight off illness
- Lower risk of allergies, ear infections, respiratory illness and obesity in breastfed babies
- Has fatty acids, like DHA, that may help your baby's brain and eyes develop
- Helps uterus return to pre-pregnancy size
- Burns calories to help mother return to pre-pregnancy weight
- Special bond between mother and baby
- Mothers who breastfeed are at lower risk of diabetes and certain cancers

Additional Resources

La Leche League - <http://www.llli.org>

La Leche League is an international nonprofit organization that helps mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.

U.S. Department of Women's Health - www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-resources.html

The office on Women's Health from the U.S. Department of Health

Kelly Mom - www.kellymom.com

Developed by an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), Kelly Mom features a wide variety of breastfeeding resources and evidence-based information on breastfeeding and parenting.

Foods to Limit or Avoid while Breastfeeding

- Limit alcohol to no more than one serving per day. Do not consume alcohol close to the time you plan to nurse.
- Limit caffeine to no more than 2 to 5 cups of caffeinated beverage per day.
- Use herbal teas with caution. Discuss these with your doctor.
- Avoid fish with high mercury levels. Eat no more than 12 oz of other seafood per week.
- Avoid tobacco and illicit drugs.
- Avoid weight-loss aids other than those recommended by your doctor.
- Talk to your doctor about vitamins and minerals while breastfeeding.

Helpful Tip: Drink a glass of water every time you breastfeed to help you stay hydrated!



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