

INFANT NUTRITION AND BREAST FEEDING

During the first year of life, good nutrition is essential to healthy growth and development. For infants to grow appropriately they need adequate calories, protein, and essential nutrients. Your infant's growth is plotted on a growth chart, which helps the doctors and nurses know that your infant is growing at a healthy rate. Newborns lose 10% of their initial birth weight due to fluid loss, but regain to their birth weight after 7 days. Typically infants double their birth weight by ages 4-6 months and triple it by age one.

Breastfeeding is healthy for you and the baby.

Benefits of breastfeeding for your baby:

- Human milk is the perfect food for your baby. It contains more than 200 nutrients plus special factors to improve your child's immune system
- Human milk changes to meet the needs of a growing baby
- Breastfed babies have fewer infections, diarrhea, and constipation
- Breastfeeding lowers the risk of asthma, colic, and food allergies
- Breastfeeding helps you connect emotionally with the infant
- Breastfed babies are less likely to be overweight later in life

Benefits of breastfeeding to you:

- Have less risk of prolonged or heavy bleeding.
- Helps the uterus return to its normal size
- Helps you lose weight more easily
- Reduces the risk of breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer
- Improves bone health
- Promotes a special relationship with the infant
- Can help you save money

Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula should be provided until the infant is 12 months old. It is recommended that infants are breastfed exclusively until 4 months of age (preferably 6 months of age) and continue until 12 months or until the mother/child wish to stop. Formula, when prepared correctly in the adequate amounts will provide sufficient amounts of all nutrients and minerals for healthy growth.

Best diet for you while breastfeeding

Eating a healthy and balanced diet is important for you and your baby. The more milk you produce, the more calories you may need. This means that someone who exclusively breastfeeds needs more than a mom that is using a combination of formula and breast milk. The energy (calorie) needs for breastfeeding are similar to your last trimester of pregnancy or about 500 calories more per day than pre-pregnancy. Try not to lose weight or cut back on your calories during the first 4-6 weeks or until your milk supply is established. Many women find that

breastfeeding helps them return to their pre-pregnancy weight. You should not lose more than 2 pounds per week; this can affect your milk supply.

Small amounts of caffeine (1-2 small cups of coffee) are considered safe for breastfeeding moms and healthy full-term babies. Small amounts of artificial sweeteners are considered safe as well. Some babies have food allergies and specific foods in the mother's diet should be eliminated. If you suspect a food allergy, discuss with your doctor.

Alcohol while breastfeeding

The effects of alcohol on the infant depend on how much the mother ingests. Most professionals agree that 1 alcoholic beverage (5 oz wine, 12 oz of beer, or 1 oz liquor) per day is safe to consume while breastfeeding. Try not to breastfeed for 2 hours after having an alcoholic beverage.

Returning to Work

Lots of moms are nervous to return back to work and fear they cannot continue to breastfeed. Having a good support system will be important in helping you succeed. It is Vermont Law for employers to allow appropriate times and a private area to express breast milk or breastfeed. Pumping breast milk manually or with an electric pump can be utilized to continue breastfeeding while at work and increase your milk supply. Some moms find it best to build up a milk supply before they go back to work. Breast milk can be stored in a refrigerator for 5 days or in the freezer for up to 5 months. Be sure to store in a clean container and label with the date it was expressed.

How do I know my baby is getting enough?

- Your infant will show you when they are hungry. Infants have an innate sense of hunger and fullness. Parents provide a safe and nurturing feeding environment and healthy foods and the infant decides whether to eat and how much. Feeding your child when hungry will lead them to know their needs will be met. Careful observation of hunger signals is important so they eat well. If initial hunger signals are not tended to the infant will become fussy or start crying. Crying infants do not eat well and should be consoled or calmed before feeding.
- Your baby will have 5-8 wet diapers and 3-4 stools per day by the time they are 7 days old.
- Your baby will be gaining weight. They should gain 4-7 oz per week and double their birth weight by 4-6 months old. If your baby is growing along their growth curve then they are getting enough to eat.

Breastfed Babies:

Feed the breastfeed baby when hungry (typically 10-12 times during first weeks of life, 8-12 times per day for the next 6 months, and 6-12 times thereafter). Feedings may last from 20-45 minutes. Feeding on demand is the best way to encourage a healthy milk supply. Using a pump or manually pumping when the mother is away from infant can help maintain or increase milk supply.

Supplements:

Breast milk does not provide adequate amounts of Vitamin D and supplementation is needed within the first few days of life. At 4 months the maternal iron stores run out and an iron supplement should be given until adequate oral iron is introduced (fortified infant cereal or meats).

Formula-fed Babies:

Be sure to make the formula as directed on packaging or by your doctor. Diluting formula can make your baby full without getting all the nutrients they need for healthy growth. Feed the formula-fed baby 6-8 times per day (every 3-4 hours) until complimentary foods are added.

As the infant gets older they will drink a larger volume of formula at one time and can go for longer periods without eating. Newborns typically drink 2 oz per feeding (about 20-30 oz per day). Do not prop the bottle, this puts them at a higher risk for choking and dental caries. It is important to hold your baby close, in a semi-upright position. This gives an opportunity for a warm and loving interaction with the infant.

You should be able to make contact and monitor for signals of hunger/fullness.

Hunger Signals

- Young infants will make eye contact, open their mouth, put hands to mouth, sucking or rooting motions, and be fussy.
- 4-6 month infants will move their head towards the food, grab the spoon.

It is important to feed the infant until full so your child grows in a healthy way. Overfeeding the infant could encourage excess weight gain and underfeeding could leave them hungry and affect their growth.

Signs of Fullness/Satiety:

Young infants will turn their head away from the nipple, close their mouth, become distracted/interested in other things, or fall asleep.

4-6 month infants will lean back, turn away from the food.

When can I introduce solid foods?

At 4-6 months solid food may be introduced if the infant is developmentally ready. During this period, the tongue thrust reflex (pushing food out of mouth) is fading and the sucking reflex is allowing for coordinated swallowing. Solid food should not replace breastfeeding or formula, but used to provide additional nutrients and to introduce new foods and feeding techniques. As the infant grows older they will eat more solid foods and drink less breast milk or formula.

They will also learn to chew and swallow, pick up finger foods, drink from a cup, and finally, feed themselves.

Signs that infant is ready for solids...

- The infant should be able to sit up and have good head control
- Does the infant open its mouth when food comes its way?
- Can the infant move the food from the spoon to its mouth?

Introduce one single ingredient food at a time. Offer a small amount (1-2 teaspoons) when the infant is well rested and not too hungry. Give them half a serving of formula and switch to the solid foods. Let the infant set the pace. Do not introduce other new foods for 3-5 days. Observe the infant for possible food allergies. Iron fortified infant cereal is a great place to start because it is iron fortified! Baby oatmeal or barley are other good options.

Gradually introduce other pureed foods (meats, fruits, and vegetables). If a baby does not like the new food, do not force it. It may take 10-15 attempts for the infant to accept a particular food.

Help us by commenting or ask your question we will be glad to answer you