



# BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

## Nutrition and Lifestyle Secrets for a Flourishing Breastfeeding Journey

Breastfeeding plays a vital role in the growth and overall health of newborns. It is a natural process that goes beyond sustenance, providing numerous benefits for both the infant and the mother.

### Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breast milk is designed to meet specific nutritional needs of a growing baby. It contains a balance of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and antibodies that support optimal growth and development.

Breastfeeding has many benefits for both mother and baby, including:

- Healthy weight gain, and optimal immune function and brain development.
- Optimal development of the infant's gut microbiome or collection of microorganisms developing in the digestive tract.
- A strong emotional bond. This nurturing bond during breastfeeding lays the foundation for secure attachment and emotional wellbeing.

### Optimize Milk Supply

Most new moms start breastfeeding (~80%) but only half (~58%) breastfeed for the recommended six months. Many factors can contribute to a lack of milk supply including infrequent feeding sessions, stress, undernutrition, or medication use. Luckily, nutrition can help mothers increase breast milk production.

## Nutrition

Consuming a nutrient-dense diet with additional calories is crucial for milk production. Breastfeeding women should focus on the following when it comes to their diet:

- **Additional Caloric Intake:** If you exclusively breastfeed, increase your daily calorie intake by 300-500 calories.
- **Incorporating Omega-3 Fats:** Also called DHA and EPA, these are essential for the development of infants' brains and eyes. Aim for 12 ounces (3 servings) of fish rich in EPA and DHA each week, such as salmon, sardines, or mackerel.
- **Consider Choline:** Choline plays a vital role in brain function, memory, and neurotransmitter function. During lactation, choline requirements are higher. To meet choline needs, consume choline-rich foods daily, such as animal proteins with a special emphasis on eggs.
- **Extra Hydration:** Maintaining proper hydration is essential for adequate milk supply while breastfeeding. Approximately 25 ounces of water per day is required to produce breast milk. It's recommended to drink an average of 128 ounces of water daily, or aim to drink a glass of water every time you breastfeed your baby.



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## Environmental Factors

Unfortunately, breast milk is not free from impurities, but there is a lot you can do to mitigate toxin exposure. The widespread contamination of human milk is a result of long-standing insufficient control over environmental pollution and consumer products, which results in exposure to toxic chemicals. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), DDT and its byproducts, glyphosate, dioxins, poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), dibenzofurans, phthalates, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), and heavy metals, are examples of the toxic chemicals frequently detected in breast milk.

Consider the following when it comes to reducing toxic load while breastfeeding:

- Become an informed consumer, and be mindful of the products you're using; including but not limited to nutritional supplements, hygiene and beauty products, household cleaning products, and cooking materials and food storage containers. EWG Consumer Guides, Safe Cosmetics, and Clean Label Project are all great resources to support intelligent and safe consumerism.
- Aim to consume organic produce when possible. Certified organic food carries minimal to zero pesticide residue. Consider the dirty dozen as a simple starting point when it comes to your organic produce choices. The Dirty Dozen is a list of the top twelve types of produce with the highest concentrations of pesticide residue.
- Consider filtering tap water where lead, arsenic, and PFAS (persistent organic pollutants) are often tested at frequently elevated levels. The Environmental Working Group offers a free tap water database based on zip code along with recommended water filtering options.
- Decrease plastic use to reduce exposure to bisphenol compounds, like BPA and BPS, and phthalates. This is especially important when shopping for breast pumps and breast milk storage options. Consider silicone-based breast pumps (such as the Haakaa) or BPA and phthalate-free pumps (like The Spectra).

## Arizona Department of Health Services Breastfeeding Program

Visit AZDHS for free breastfeeding support for mom and baby, including a 24/7 breastfeeding hotline (1-800-833-4642).