

NUTRITION DURING LACTATION

During the first six months after delivery, the baby is fed only on breast milk, and the baby depends on the mother for all nutrient requirements. Eating a healthy diet while breastfeeding is important because the mother's diet during this period determines the energy, protein, nutrient and vitamin contents of the breast milk. Additionally, some minerals and vitamins are required for body processes such as healing of the wounds quickly (e.g. [vitamin C](#) and [zinc](#)). Nutritional demands during lactation period are high and can have a negative impact on both the mother and infant if they are not met adequately. The mother's daily diet, therefore, requires to be adequately selected as well as appropriately prepared.

Approximately, 500 Kcal are needed more per day than a non-pregnant, non-breast-feeding woman. It is, therefore, recommended a minimum of 1800 Kcal per day. In case of the breast-feeding mothers, the recommended plan is 2500-3300 Kcal per day, depending upon physical activities.

It is also advised for consumption of foods and eating according to appetite, especially for the first 2 months.

Initial weight loss may occur during lactation if calorie restrictions are not followed. Gradual weight loss of 250gm-900gm per week is best. Normally, returning to pre pregnancy weight takes many months and may extend to a year.

However, limiting calories severely in the efforts to lose weight, may affect milk supply. Thus, weight loss should not exceed over 900gm per week. Usage of medications and following diets that promise rapid weight loss is to avoided strictly.

It's not advised for recommendation of consuming less than 1800 Kcal per day because nutrient needs will, most likely, be inadequate.

Recommended Nutrients' Plan:

Foods rich in vitamins A, E, C and D as well as the B vitamins and folate, zinc, calcium and magnesium.

Following points are important guidelines for this particular type of Diet Plan:

- It is suggested for moderate intake of tea, coffee, and cola. Be aware that decaffeinated coffee still contains some caffeine.
- Recommend no alcohol because it does reach the baby via breast milk if the mother drinks. It can also affect the milk letdown and ejection reflex, thereby decreasing the amount milk baby gets.
- It is suggested to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. The recommendation is to have additional fluids over & above the patient's normal liquid intake quantity before the lactation period. As a good guideline, drink a glass of water, milk each time the baby is breast –fed. However, excessive fluids intake doesn't necessarily increase milk supply.
- Advocate high-iron foods (for example, red meat, liver, fish, poultry, pulses etc.) accompanied with vitamin C rich food to aid heme iron absorption. Consumption of coffee or tea is restricted during this period to control inhibition of iron absorption by mother and the baby.
- Protein intake should be 1.2- 1.5 Kcal per kg of body wt. Non vegetarian patients may take fish, chicken, egg, milk etc. which contain larger amount of good quality protein as well as these contain good amount of calcium also. For vegetarian patients good quality protein is derived from only milk and, therefore, additional protein supplements will make up their quality and quantity of protein intake.
- Fibre is another important nutrient in today's world of Nutrition science. So, in this period good amount of fibre (from fruit, vegetables, pulses etc) is needed to avoid constipation as well as decreasing the cholesterol level.

A SAMPLE MENU DURING LACTATION PERIOD

SCHEDULE	LACTATION
Breakfast (A)	Cereal -1 bowl Citrus fruit -1 Vegetable -1 serving Egg -1
Mid-morning (B)	Milk shake with protein supplement / Lassi- 1 glass Egg white-1 Cereals – ½ bowl
Lunch (C)	Cereals-1 & ½ bowl Dal- 1 bowl Vegetable- 2 serving (1 leafy veg) Fish/chicken-2 pc Curd -1 serving bowl; Salad
Evening snacks(D)	Cereals- 1 & ½ bowl, Peanut- 10 to 15 pcs Chhola/mattor/chhana- 1 bowl Milk- 1 glass Fruit -1
Dinner (E)	Cereals- 1 bowl Dal -1 bowl Vegetable 1 serving Fish/chicken- 1 pc Salad
Bed time(F)	Whole Milk & protein supplement- 1 glass
Nutrient Analysis	
Calories	2750 calories
Protein	106 gm
Fat	74 gm
Carbohydrate	415 gm
Calcium	1550 mg
Iron	31 mg

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Diet varies according to different risk factors and, thus, based on particular dietary needs a nutritional plan of care is devised. The patient is routinely monitored for her biochemical parameters, even after pregnancy during lactation period.

Above mentioned diet chart is a sample menu and for individual clarifications a tailor made diet chart prescribed by a Nutritionist is suggested.