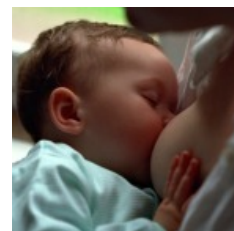




Breastmilk and Your Diet

What affects the content of my breastmilk?

Pregnant women usually pay close attention to their diet, since every food, beverage, and drug they ingest may make its way to their baby. Fortunately, this is not exactly the case with breastmilk.



Breastmilk is produced from the mammary glands in your breasts, not directly from the substances you ingest. These glands draw on the resources available in the form of nutrients from your diet and from your body's stores of nutrients. If your diet contains insufficient calories or nutrients to fully sustain both you and your nursing child, your mammary glands will have "first shot" at your body's available nutrients to produce highly nutritious breastmilk, leaving you to rely on whatever is left over. So a less-than-ideal diet will probably not affect your breastfeeding child, but it may leave *your body* at nutritional risk. (If you have any concerns that you may not be getting the proper amount of nutrients, talk to your doctor or nutritionist about improving your diet or the possibility of taking supplements.)

The mammary glands and cells that produce milk also help regulate how much of what you eat and drink actually reaches your baby. Moderate consumption of coffee, tea, caffeinated sodas, and an occasional glass of wine or other alcoholic beverage are fine when you are breastfeeding. However, some babies are more sensitive than others, so keep a close eye on your baby to see how she reacts. It is also reassuring to know that the drugs injected for epidural blocks and other types of regional anesthesia during childbirth do not pass into breast milk sufficiently to cause longterm harm, though they may make your baby a little sleepy at first. In cases when general anesthesia is used, your anesthesiologist or obstetrician should be informed in advance of your plans to breastfeed.

Most medications are safe to take during breastfeeding, but there are a few—including some nonprescription substances—that may be harmful to the baby. These are not always the same medications that are dangerous for pregnant women to take, so be sure to get approval for all medications from your doctor and your baby's pediatrician. Excessive alcohol or any kind of recreational drug or medication that has not been approved by your pediatrician should *not* be indulged in, since enough of it could be passed on to your baby and cause serious harm.

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

