

Breastfeeding and Your Diet

While breastfeeding, what you eat and drink can affect your baby. So while you're nursing, avoid drinking alcohol because it can pass through your milk to your baby. If you choose to drink alcohol, drink it just after you nurse rather than just before.

Do not smoke while you are breastfeeding, or around children at all! Secondhand smoke is dangerous to all children, but especially to newborns. It increases the risk of SIDS.

Try to avoid caffeine or at least reduce your intake while you are breastfeeding. Caffeine tends to build up in babies' systems because their bodies cannot get rid of it very easily. A morning cup of coffee is not likely to harm your baby, but too much caffeine can cause problems such as poor sleeping, nervousness, irritability, and poor feeding. Try using decaffeinated coffee and tea and avoid colas and other carbonated drinks that have added caffeine.

Sometimes breastfeeding babies react to certain foods that their mothers eat. You might notice that after eating spicy or "gassy" foods, your baby cries, fusses, or even nurses more often. Since babies with colic often have similar symptoms, the best way to tell the difference between a food reaction and colic is by how long symptoms last. With food reactions, symptoms are usually short-lived, lasting less than 24 hours. Symptoms caused by colic occur daily and often last for days or weeks at a time. If your baby gets symptoms every time you eat a certain type of food, stop eating that particular item.

In rare instances, your breastfed infant may be allergic to the cow's milk in your diet. Symptoms can appear anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours after she breastfeeds and may include: diarrhea, rash, fussiness, and gas. To tell whether your baby is allergic, you need to cut out all dairy products from your diet for 2 weeks. Then one by one, return each dairy product to your diet to see whether your baby has a reaction after nursing.

Most medications are safe to take during breastfeeding, but there are a few that can be dangerous for the baby. To be sure, let your doctor and your baby's pediatrician know that you are breastfeeding. Get approval for all medications, including non-prescription drugs. Also, take the medication just after you nurse rather than just before.

Some birth control pills also might affect your milk production, but effects vary from woman to woman and with the type of pill. Discuss this with your doctor.