



## Breast Milk and How It Works

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### Breast Milk – What is it like?

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Colostrum is the name of the first milk that is made by your breasts. It varies in colour from woman to woman and is sometimes a clear colour and other times yellow and even slightly pink at times. In response to the drop in pregnancy hormones and also stimulation, a few days later you may notice the milk becoming thinner and whiter in colour. This is early mature milk.

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### Breast Changes

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At the time of your baby's birth your breasts will feel soft. As your breasts start to produce milk they will feel fuller and firmer. Sometimes this fullness when considerable is called engorgement and may last a couple of weeks until your milk supply is regulated by your baby's sucking and nutritional needs.

Your breasts will become softer again as your milk matures and the breasts adapt to making and storing milk. The size of your breasts will make no difference to the quality or the amount of milk you make.

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### Your Health

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It is important to care for yourself while you are breastfeeding. If you become overtired or skip meals this may reduce your milk supply.

Eat three nutritious meals a day and do not diet while breastfeeding. There are no special foods that will increase or decrease your milk supply so long as you follow a balanced eating plan. Eating an excess of one type of food may have an effect on your baby just like it would for you- for example lots of prunes or dried fruit may cause loose bowel motions in your baby. Drink water to thirst and not in excess. More water beyond your natural thirst does not equal more milk.

Excessive amounts of caffeine can not only effect your milk supply but can potentially overstimulate yourself and your baby. Limit foods and beverages containing caffeine to 2 serves a day considering tea, coffee, cola and chocolate as all of these contain caffeine.

***All foods may be eaten when you are breastfeeding therefore there is no need to eliminate any foods or food groups.***

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### Nicotine, Alcohol, and Prescription Medications

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Smoking is discouraged when breastfeeding as the exposure to toxic chemicals in breastmilk is associated with an increased risk of a Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) event. If you are interested in Nicotine Replacement Therapy discuss this with your midwife or doctor.

NSW Health advises that you refrain from drinking alcohol while you are breastfeeding. If you have a special event to attend and you would like to partake in an alcoholic beverage discuss this with a health professional or look up the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)

website where you can learn how to manage this safely. You can also download the ABA App. The Feed Safe App is also a very useful resource.

If you have been prescribed a prescription medication often the GP will quote the drug companies position on taking this while breastfeeding. Most of the time they will recommend it is not compatible. For more reliable, evidence based information contact MotherSafe-Medications in Pregnancy and Lactation Service, based at Royal Hospital for Women. This service operates from Monday to Friday and includes advice when taking Prescription drugs, Over- the- counter medications, Street drugs, Infections, Radiation and Occupational exposures. Also check their website for more generalised information.