



Healthy Eating

Susan Brady, the editor of *The World Is a Kitchen*, is a woman with a passion for food. When not living the life of a typical suburban soccer mom, she spends long hours in the kitchen testing recipes from around the world, and travels to faraway places to learn new cuisines.

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NUTRITION & DIET

Daily Diet: Breastfeeding Mothers Not Getting Proper Dietary Requirements

By Susan Brady
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Breastfeeding has been on the wane in industrialized nations over the past few decades, due to the addition of women in the work force, but it is one of the greatest gifts you can give a child, even if only for a few months. The health benefits for children include a reduced risk of respiratory illnesses, asthma, ear infections, stomach problems, as well as a decreased risk of diabetes and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Breastfeeding has also shown to potentially ward off allergies, diabetes, and even obesity later in life for breastfed babies.

Studies have shown that babies need touching and nurturing to develop and survive and breastfeeding supplies both needs on a regular basis. Those physical and emotional aspects of breastfeeding, along with the fatty acids and other essential nutrients provided by breastmilk may be why breastfed babies tend to have higher IQs. Reserchers at Canada's McGill University found that babies who were exclusively breastfed for the first three months scored 5.9% higher on IQ tests in childhood. Tests indicated that the longer the babies were breastfed the more significant the intelligence difference.

According to Audrey Naylor, M.D., "Even if a mother breastfeeds for just a few weeks after giving birth, she is giving her baby an enormous health boost with positive effects that can be seen almost immediately, as well as long-term benefits that may help her child remain healthier clear into adulthood."

For breastfeeding to be successful and of the highest possible benefit, mothers must get a healthy diet and plenty of fluids, but that is not happening in the majority of mothers. A University of Granada study reports that 94 percent of new breastfeeding mothers are not sticking to a proper diet. They lacked the recommended daily intake of fat, iron and vitamins A and E, while their protein intake was too high.

While its not the end of the world if you have a bad eating day here and there, it is important to be consistent and consume sufficient calories. Given the extra energy required for milk production, it is recommended that nursing women consume a minimum of 2,000 calories per day. A balance of protein, carbs and fats is necessary, along with healthy portions of fruits and vegetables. Additionally, increased fluid intake is required, preferably in the form of nutritive drinks such as milk and 100% juice, rather than coffee and soda. (One good rule of thumb is to drink 8 ounces every time you sit down to breastfeed your infant.)

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