

# NUTRITION FOR LACTATION

## Energy Needs (birth- 6months)

During a baby's first 6 months of life, he or she relies solely on the mother for their nutritional needs. This means extra calories are necessary!

An additional 330 calories per day are needed to keep up with the demands of feeding an infant 6 months old or younger. Caloric requirements may vary based on the BMI of the mother (Kazen, S. & Grimsley, M., 2022).



## Energy Needs (6 months- 1 year)

After the 6 month mark, even more calories are needed, around 400 extra calories per day (Kazen, S. & Grimsley, M., 2022). This is necessary to keep up with the rapid growth and development of the baby at this stage. Their caloric requirements are increasing, and therefore, the breastfeeding mothers' are too (National Institutes of Health, 2017).

## Essential Micronutrients

Iodine, vitamin A, and zinc are notable micronutrients for breastfeeding mothers to be aware of.

**Iodine** supports the growth and development of the baby's neurological system, and is needed in about 290  $\mu\text{g}$ / day. It is found in milk, yogurt, eggs, seafood, and iodized salt (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2026).

**Vitamin A** supports baby's eye development. Vitamin A stores may be low after birth, so the RDA is 1300 mcg/day (Kazen, S. & Grimsley, M., 2022). Foods like sweet potato, spinach, liver, carrots, and mangoes are high in Vitamin A (Obinwanne, C., 2025).

**Zinc** is important for immune support and recovery from birth. It also helps with the growth and development of the baby (Obinwanne, C., 2025). The RDA is 12mg for breastfeeding moms (Kazen, S. & Grimsley, M., 2022). Zinc is found in chickpeas, cashews, beef, pumpkin seeds, and whole grains (Obinwanne, C., 2025).

## Foods to Limit or Avoid

Similar to pregnancy, it is important to avoid any foods or substances that could harm your baby.

**Tobacco** is not safe to use while breastfeeding, and **alcoholic beverages** should be limited to one drink per day, or less, and it is best to wait 2-3 hours after drinking to breastfeed (Kazen, S. & Grimsley, M., 2022).

**High- mercury fish** such as shark, swordfish and mackerel should be avoided entirely (Mayo Clinic, 2025).

**Caffeinated drinks** should be limited to 2-3 cups per day, as they can disrupt baby's sleep patterns (Mayo Clinic, 2025).

Talk to your healthcare provider about any **herbs or supplements** you are currently taking, as some can slow milk supply or cause harm to the newborn, as their brain and body systems are still developing (Miles, K., accessed 2026).

Be sure to take note of your baby's cues, as you may need to limit spicy or garlic-y foods if you find that your baby doesn't tolerate your milk well after you eat them (Callahan, A., Leonard, H., Powell, T., 2020).



## Sample Meal Plan:

### Breakfast: 470 cal

Yogurt bowl with whole grain granola, pumpkin seeds, and blueberries on top.

### Snack #1: 306 cal

Whole grain toast with cashew butter and sliced banana

### Lunch: 439 cal, 45g protein, 27g carb, 19 g fat

Bowl with salmon, quinoa, chickpeas, shredded carrots, feta, spinach, tomatoes, and tzatziki dressing.

### Snack#2: 311 cal, 15g protein, 53g carb, 5g fat

Mango smoothie with greek yogurt and pineapple juice

### Dinner: 539 cal , 57g Protein, 29g Carb, 19g fat

Sirloin steak with roasted sweet potatoes and a salad with mixed spring greens and spinach, pecans, and dressing of choice

### Bedtime Snack: 522 cal, 15g protein, 31g carb, 38g fat

Sleepy mocktail with tart cherry juice (for melatonin) a splash of lime, and sparkling water and some peanuts with dark chocolate

(Cronometer, accessed 2026).



## References:

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