

Greenwich Hospital

Why is good nutrition important for new Moms?

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Why is good nutrition important for new Moms?

Congratulations and best wishes to you and your growing family. Good nutrition for both you and your new baby will be essential over the next months. We have compiled some common questions below from other new moms, along with answers. If you have further questions, feel free to consult one of the hospital's registered dietitians at (203)863-5211, or speak with your doctor.

- **Do I need to eat more calories if I am breast feeding, and if so, how can I lose my excess pregnancy weight?**

Breast-feeding moms should eat about 500 more calories daily over what they ate before becoming pregnant. Despite this, the extra calories you burn up because of breast-feeding (up to 800 calories a day) could help you lose about 4 to 5 pounds a month without reducing your milk supply. It is important to eat at least 1800 calories each day to support requirements for nursing.

500 extra healthy calories would include:

2 extra vegetables + 1 extra fruit + 1 extra low fat dairy serving + 2 additional ounces of lean protein + 2 additional bread servings.

If weight loss is your goal, choose low fat foods and avoid "junk" foods or convenience foods when possible. Also, get your doctor's approval before starting a weight loss program. Many doctors advise waiting at least 6 weeks after giving birth. Limiting your intake too early after birth may affect your milk supply.

One vitally important nutrient that sometimes gets overlooked is water. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends drinking 8 to 12 8-ounce glasses of water a day to stay hydrated.

- **How long will it take for me to get back to my pre-pregnancy weight?**

Much of the weight you gained consisted of fluid, extra blood volume, and most importantly, your baby. On average, woman may have 7 or more pounds of "fat" weight to lose after giving birth. Slow weight loss is recommended, about 1 to 2 pounds a month. It may take up to a year for you to return to your pre-pregnancy weight.

This will, of course, depend upon factors such as how much weight you gained during your pregnancy and whether or not you are breast-feeding. You may burn more calories breast-feeding, so the weight may come off faster. Eating right can help you lose weight for the long term and help keep your energy level up.

- I am really tired. What kind of food and snacks should I have handy to keep my energy up and still help me lose my pregnancy weight? I do not want to spend all day cooking.

Fatigue is one of the biggest challenges new moms face. Not only are you busy taking care of your newborn, your own body's iron stores may be low. This could contribute to your tiredness. The good news is that there are helpful tactics you can use and there are lots of healthy, easy to prepare snacks you can keep handy to get your through your day. Some snacks to have handy include:

- Fruit
- Sweet Potatoes*
- Low-fat Sliced Cheese
- Whole Grain Bread
- Pre-cut Vegetables
- Crackers
- Low Sugar/Low fat Yogurt

* Sweet potatoes are low in calories, high in beta carotene, and a good source of vitamin C. To cook them, wash and prick with a knife; place in the microwave oven on a paper towel; cook 3 to 5 minutes for each potato. You can also bake them in a conventional oven at 375 degrees for about 45 minutes, or until tender. Wrap the potatoes in plastic wrap for microwave cooking and foil for oven baking. This helps to keep the skin moist.

If you have further questions while you are in the hospital, just ask the nursing staff to page the dietician; or you can dial the dietician directly by calling extension 5211.

For more Patient Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and Click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education