

## Postpartum Nutrition after Preeclampsia

Congratulations on the birth of your baby. We hope to help better care for yourself as you recover with some nutrition suggestions in this guide. This handout outlines a healthful postpartum eating pattern that is also consistent with the diet recommended for most adults with hypertension. You should eat whole grains, fruits and vegetables every day and limit sodium in your diet. New moms should also emphasize sources of protein, calcium, vitamin C and iron. Nutrition plays a role in energy levels, preventing illness, breast milk quality, and weight control. Maternal nutrition affects your baby directly through breast milk and indirectly by providing you with energy and good health to allow you to care for your baby. Good nutrition also sets the stage for positive role modeling for your family.

Regular meals and snacks of nutrient dense foods will help maintain energy levels and promote healing. If breastfeeding, regular meals and snacks as well as drinking enough water will help meet nutrient and calorie needs as well as maintain energy levels for milk production. It is important to have a balanced diet filled with a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats, and calcium rich foods.

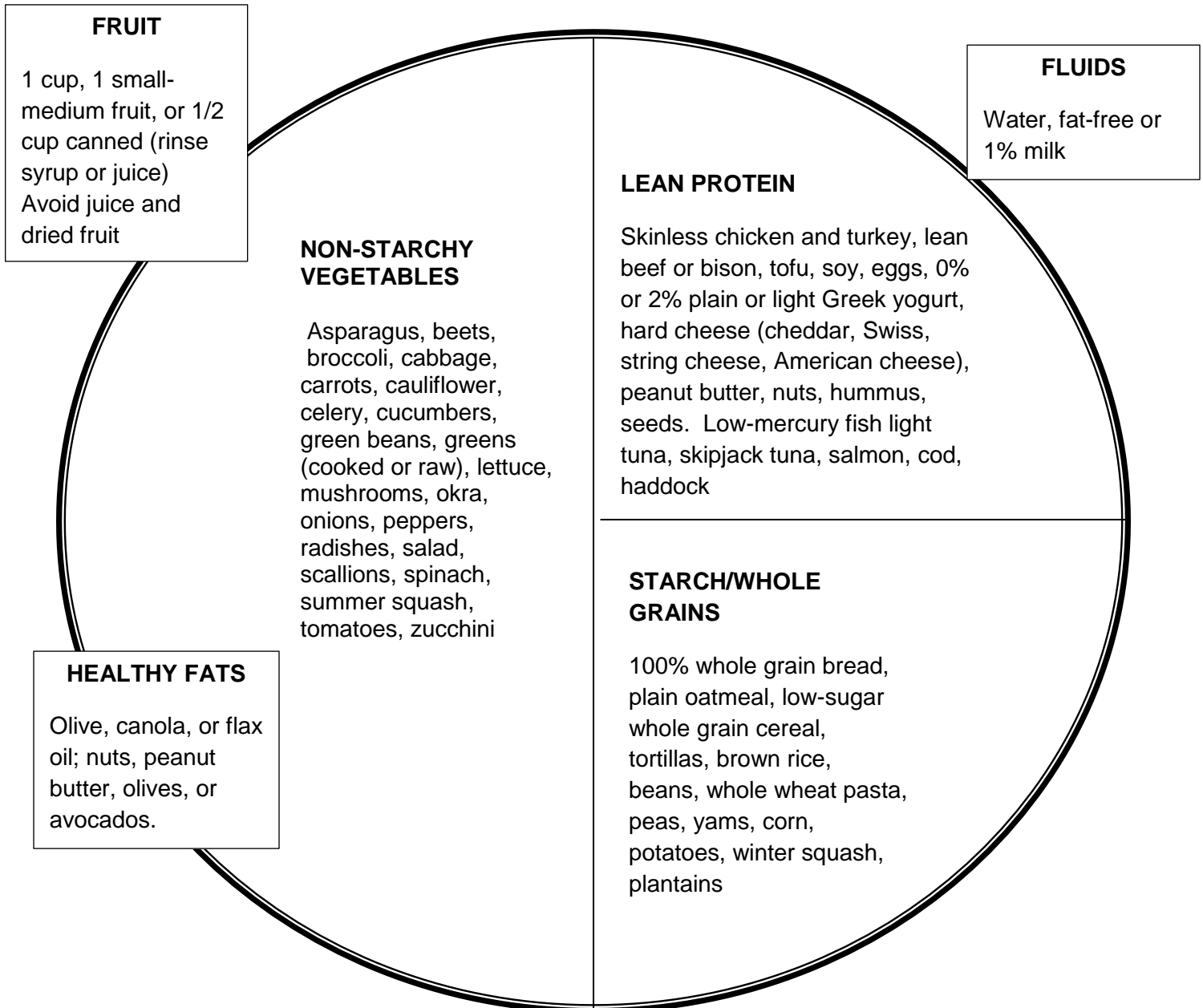
- Weight loss is a goal for many new moms. The healthiest way to lose weight is gradually at a rate of 4-5 pounds per month.
- As you recover from your delivery, you can slowly increase physical activity as medically appropriate. Walking is a great way to start! Your goal should be 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity exercise, such as a brisk walk.
- Eating nutrient dense foods is important. Reduce your intake of processed foods containing high levels of saturated fat, sugar, and salt. Examples include fried foods, fast food, cookies, cakes, pastries, chips, etc.
- Especially if you have high blood pressure, limiting sodium in your diet is important. Limit the added salt when cooking or at the table and avoid commercially prepared and packaged foods whenever possible. Generally, the more processed a food is, the more sodium it will contain.

## Daily Nutrition Recommendations

| FOODS  | # servings a day   | Importance of Food  |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Foods high in protein</b><br/>Chicken, tofu, beans, fish, peanut butter, nuts, steak, pork, turkey, eggs, cheese, hummus</p> <p><b>Iron-rich protein</b><br/>Meat, poultry, pork, fish, eggs, beans</p>  | <p><b>9 ounces</b><br/><b>(3 ounces is about the size of your palm)</b></p>  | <p>Builds healthy tissue and heals wounds from pregnancy. Keeps you full and maintains healthy blood sugar.</p> <p>Iron is lost during pregnancy and delivery. It is important to replenish your stores for energy. Iron helps increase red blood cells. Eating iron-rich foods with Vitamin C foods helps increase iron absorption</p> |
| <p><b>Calcium-rich foods</b><br/>Milk (cow's, soy, almond, rice), yogurt, cheese, Calcium- fortified orange juice, fortified tofu, sardines w/bones</p>  | <p><b>4 servings</b><br/><b>(1 cup milk, yogurt, OJ; 1 stick/slice cheese)</b></p>   | <p>Calcium helps keep your bones and teeth strong. Vitamin D (also found in some dairy products) helps with calcium absorption. The best source of Vitamin D is the sun, but fatty fish, fortified foods, and supplements are alternatives.</p>   |
| <p><b>Vegetables and Fruits</b><br/>Apples, bananas, spinach, collard greens, carrots, sweet potatoes, squash, green beans, cauliflower, peaches, etc.</p> <p><b>Vitamin C-rich foods</b><br/>Broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, oranges, strawberries, cantaloupe</p> | <p><b>5-8 servings</b><br/><b>(1 cup raw, 1/2 cup cooked)</b></p>  | <p>Packed with vitamins and minerals needed for bodily functions. Good sources of fiber to help with constipation.</p> <p>Vitamin C helps your body use iron more efficiently. It is also an antioxidant and helps boost immunity.</p>  |
| <p><b>Grains and Starches</b><br/>Whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice, pasta, whole wheat tortilla, oatmeal, whole wheat English muffin, tabouli, injera</p>  | <p><b>6-11 servings</b><br/><b>(1 slice bread; 1/2 cup cooked brown rice, oatmeal, one 6 inch tortilla)</b></p>                              | <p>Carbohydrates are our primary energy source and choose whole grains when possible. B-vitamins provide energy and whole grains are a good source of fiber.</p>  |
| <p><b>Water and other fluids</b><br/>Water is the best fluid to drink. Diluted juice (1/4 cup juice, 3/4 cup water) is also a good option.</p>   | <p><b>64 ounces/day</b><br/><b>(1 cup = 8 ounces)</b></p>  | <p>Water keeps you hydrated, energized and can help relieve constipation. Being hydrated is important for milk production.</p>  |
| <p><b>Oils</b><br/>Use unsaturated fats like olive and canola oil in cooking and dressings.</p> <p><b>Sweet Treats</b><br/>Candy, cookies, cake, pie, chocolate</p>  | <p><b>1-3 servings/d</b><br/><b>(1 tablespoon)</b></p> <p><b>Occasionally</b><br/><b>(1 cookie or 1/2 cup ice cream about 1-3x/week)</b></p> | <p>Unsaturated fats (in oils and peanut butter, nuts and avocado) when substituted for saturated fats lower "bad" LDL cholesterol.</p> <p>High in calories and saturated fat raises bad" (LDL) cholesterol.</p>   |

## Balance your plate at every meal!

The Balanced Plate for pregnant and new mothers is a guide for how to build healthy meals. Eating a balance of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, protein, healthy oils, and water gives your body everything it needs. **Follow the Plate guidelines: Make 1/2 of your plate fruits and vegetables, 1/4 of your plate whole grains, and 1/4 of your plate healthy protein.**



## Healthy meal and snack ideas:

When you're a new mom, time can be hard to find between caring for your baby and fulfilling other responsibilities. One tip is to eat while breastfeeding. Try these quick and nutritious meal/snack ideas:

### Snacks

- 1 Tbsp. peanut butter with 1 slice whole wheat bread or 1/2 whole wheat English muffin
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt with 1/2 cup berries + 1/4 cup nuts
- Raw vegetables + 2 tablespoons hummus
- 1 slice low fat cheese + orange
- 2 oz. canned salmon + 1 serving whole grain crackers
- 1 Cheese stick and carrots
- 1/3 cup tabouli or baba ganoush + 1/2 whole wheat pita
- 1/4 cup unsalted almonds + 1 small apple
- 1 hardboiled egg + 1 slice whole wheat toast

### Meals:

- Drain and rinse canned black beans. Then, add chopped vegetables like pepper and onion and desired spices. Mix with cooked brown rice. Heat on stovetop and add small amount of shredded cheese, fresh salsa and guacamole as desired before serving.
- Cook collard greens, kale or other leafy green with olive oil in small skillet until wilted. Add two eggs and scramble to desired consistency. Place on top of whole wheat bread or brown rice.
- Add chicken or cannellini beans to cooked whole wheat pasta. Then, add some cooked or raw vegetables like broccoli, spinach, artichokes, and peas. Toss with olive oil, pepper and balsamic vinegar. Add small amount of feta or part skim mozzarella cheese
- Add curry powder, plain yogurt, raisins, lemon juice, chopped red pepper, and steamed broccoli, rinsed and drained chickpeas and cooked brown rice.
- Cook sweet potato in microwave for 8 minutes. Slice open, add drained black beans, small amount of low fat cheese, and chopped vegetables.
- Mince garlic, scallions, ginger and add to steamed vegetables, tofu or shrimp (frozen are the fastest) and cooked brown rice.
- Try whole grain pasta with canned sardines and low salt tomato sauce
- Cook lentils with spinach and tomatoes and peppers
- Tuna melt: chunk light tuna fish + whole grain English muffin + low fat shredded cheese + tomato slice with side garden salad with leafy greens
- Stir fry tofu with kale and onions and quinoa
- Always remember the leftovers in the fridge and freezer! And, cooking large batches of grains, beans and fresh/frozen vegetables can help decrease time.

## Other Nutrition Concerns

### Calories

Eating enough to maintain energy levels and fuel your body is important. Eating 5-6 small meals or snacks each day will give you the calories you need. The quality of what you eat is just as important as the amount you eat!

### Exercise

Exercise can help achieve a healthy weight and improve heart health. Slowly increase physical activity (if medically appropriate) to reach at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily. Walking is a great activity to start with.

### Avoid these foods to limit your salt intake:

- Processed / salted meats: ham, bacon, sausage, cold cuts, hot dogs, Koshered meat
- Salted fish: tuna, sardines, anchovies, lox
- Canned: vegetables, beans, soups, sauces, broths, bouillon, gravy mixes
- Convenience foods: frozen entrees, pizzas, boxed pasta/macaroni and cheese/rice pilafs and stuffing mixes (with seasoning packets), fast food
- Sauces: Steak, Teriyaki, Soy, Cocktail, Worcestershire, Tartar, Barbeque, Tomato
- Condiments: Ketchup, pickles, olives, relish, sauerkraut, salad dressings

**Vegetarian and Vegan diets:** A well-balanced vegetarian/vegan diet includes protein sources like tofu, nuts, peanut butter and beans. It should also include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and healthy fats. However, when following a vegan or vegetarian diet, **it** can be difficult to get enough calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is particularly hard for vegans since it is only found in animal products. A good source is fortified cereal or your prenatal vitamins. If you are a vegetarian or vegan, talk to your doctor and/or dietitian.

## Breastfeeding Concerns

### Eating enough:

You will need more calories to help increase breast milk production. Depending on milk supply, breastfeeding mothers need an extra ~500 calories each day! Try eating 5-6 small meals or snacks a day of nutrient dense foods – full of vitamins and minerals, but are lower in salt, sugar and unhealthy fats. The quality of what you eat is just as important as the amount you eat! If you skip meals or eat less than about 1800 calories a day, without adequate fluid intake you may lack energy and this can decrease milk supply. To stay hydrated, aim for 8 glasses a day of water. Try adding slices of fruit to flavor your water.

### Alcoholic beverages

Alcoholic beverages can reduce milk production and small amounts can be passed on to your baby through your milk. Generally, alcoholic beverages should be avoided but likely one drink consumed just after feeding and two hours before the next feeding is thought to have minimal effects. If there are any concerns, milk can be pumped and dumped after consuming alcoholic beverages.

## Caffeinated beverages

Caffeine is passed to babies through breast milk. It is felt that you can have up to 2-3 cups of caffeinated beverages a day. It is not clear how much caffeine there is in energy drinks so read labels. Any caffeine consumption can cause some babies to be irritable and sleep poorly so be in touch with your pediatrician.

## Weight loss

Breastfeeding burns extra calories. If you eat in a healthful, well-balanced manner you can lose weight while breastfeeding. It is safe to lose ½ - 1 pound a week 2-4 weeks postpartum.

## Exercise

Exercise stimulates milk production. Some babies are sensitive to the lactic acid produced after mom exercises, so some women breastfeed their babies right before exercising and then 1-2 hours after. And remember, always talk to your doctor before you start an exercise regimen.

## Medications

Some medications are okay to take while breastfeeding and some are not. If you are taking medication for your blood pressure be sure to discuss this with your doctor but there are many safe options.

## Sugar and Sugar Substitutes

- Stevia and Splenda have been shown to be safe while breastfeeding
- Limit: (no more than 1-2 foods or beverages per day): Aspartame (Equal, NutraSweet, Nutra-Taste)
- Avoid: Saccharin (Sweet 'N Low), Acesulfame K (Sunett; Sweet One; Ace-K), Nectresse (monk fruit)

## OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

### Websites:

- The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) has been shown to reduce blood pressure in people with borderline hypertension (high blood pressure).  
<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/dash-eating-plan> and  
[https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/dash\\_brief.pdf](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/dash_brief.pdf)
- American Academy of Pediatrics' Healthy Children: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)
- BWH breastfeeding guide:  
<https://www.brighamandwomens.org/assets/BWH/obgyn/pdfs/breastfeeding-guide.pdf>