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As a new mom there is plenty to think about: will you breastfeed or bottle feed; what diapers are best; when will my baby sleep; and what can I do to be a fit and healthy mom. It can be a bit overwhelming whether this is your first little munchkin' or you've been around the block a time or two. Either way, you will find the essential information you need to get you through the first few months and beyond.

## ***NUTRITION FOR MOM AND BABY***

Chances are you took some extra precautions while pregnant to promote the growth of a healthy baby. You may have avoided certain foods, or added other foods to your diet. Even after baby arrives you should continue to focus on the food you put in your body to help you provide essential nutrients for your baby (if breastfeeding), shed pounds, and have the energy you need to keep up with a little one!

First and foremost, continue to take your prenatal vitamin, this will help replace any deficiencies created during the 40 weeks you were building a human. In fact, during pregnancy the body does an amazing job of making sure the baby gets everything it needs. However, sometimes this comes at a cost to mom. For example, if you are not consuming enough calcium during pregnancy your body takes calcium from your body – i.e.: your bones – and gives it to the baby's growing skeleton. With this in mind, continuing a vitamin while choosing foods from each food group is an important part of being a new mommy.

Aside from a well-rounded diet, there are several nutrients you may want to pay special attention to: folate, calcium, vitamin C and Zinc. These probably sound familiar from your pregnancy days, and they continue to be important. Here's a quick run-down of the nutrient, why it's important, and where to find the goodness:

## ***ESSENTIAL NUTRITIONAL NEEDS***

<b>VITAMIN/MINERAL</b>	<b>WHAT IT DOES</b>	<b>FOOD SOURCE</b>
<b>Folate</b> (aka: Folic Acid)	For baby's brain development, especially if breastfeeding	Leafy vegetables, green beans, legumes, fortified cereals, and fruit
<b>Calcium</b>	Baby and mom need this for strong bones	Dark leafy greens, beans, lentils, dried peas, legumes, some seeds, fortified orange juice, fortified tofu, milk, and yogurt.
<b>Vitamin C</b>	Helps both mom and baby fight disease and improve immunity; helps the body absorb iron	Citrus fruits and juices, strawberries, broccoli, cabbage. Potatoes, green peppers
<b>Zinc</b>	Promotes growth and immunity	Beef, poultry, seafood, eggs, pork, fortified cereal, yogurt, legumes, and seeds

## ***DURING THE FIRST 6 WEEKS AFTER BIRTH***

Eat to meet your appetite, focusing on nutrient dense foods. Nutrients important during lactation include: folic acid, calcium, vitamin C, zinc, Vitamin A.

Focusing on these nutrients is important, but a new mom cannot forget about those heavy hitters – the macronutrients. The three main macronutrients are: protein, fat, and carbohydrates. We will touch on protein on page 3 under breastfeeding, but for all new moms protein is a must – so important, it's considered the building blocks of life! Your little one needs protein to sustain its' rapid growth in the first year. Mom needs protein to recover from the physiological strain of pregnancy and childbirth. Protein recommendations are made based on overall calorie needs, however, the USDA recommends about 30% of total calories. Aim to enjoy protein at most meals and snacks.

Weight loss is one of the things on mom's mind; however, in the first months after baby, make sure you are focusing on feeding yourself wholesome foods and adjusting to life with a new baby. When you are ready, you will want meals that consist of all 3 macronutrients. Note that you do not need to avoid fat to lose fat. Actual grams of fat will vary, but 20-30% of your total calories should come from fat. When looking at the different types of fat, you want to limit saturated fats – found in high-fat meats, butter, lard, and hydrogenated oil. Instead get your fat fix from the good fats found in avocados, olives, nuts, seeds, and fish. Keep in mind, although these fats are good for you, portion size is key to getting the good stuff you need while not overdoing the calories.

A note about fish: the DHA found in fish helps the baby's brain development and has been shown to help lower your risk of postpartum depression. Your best bets are Atlantic salmon, sockeye salmon, rainbow trout, Pacific herring, shrimp, king crab, lobster, and canned light tuna. Consuming fish twice a week provides the body with the recommended amounts of DHA and omega-3 fatty acids. Mercury levels are a concern in some fish but as long as you avoid shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish you need not worry.

Finally there are carbohydrates, majority of our nutritional needs. Carbohydrates found in fruits, dairy, vegetables and some whole grains will help give your body the energy it needs while also providing a boost of vitamins and minerals. It is important to get most of your carbs from the sources listed above and avoid an abundance of white flour and sugar as they provide a good amount of empty calories.

Important Note: There is variation in macros when you talk about different goals and diet specifications, a Registered Dietitian can cover your specific macro consumption.

## ***BUILDING A HEALTHY PLATE***

When you focus on a variety of foods from each of these areas you are well on your way to building a healthy plate. When you build this plate, the foundation is the total calorie goal but also a balanced, wholesome approach to the foods you consume. You can eat tons of great foods, but if you eat too much you will gain weight. You do not have to hit the exact same number of calories each and every day, but you want to average that amount over the course of the seven days. This may mean that one day is a little higher calorie, while another day is lower. Connecting with your hunger and fullness cues will help you determine what is right for you. Your body will have a natural ebb and flow in the energy it needs based on your activity level, the baby's demands if nursing, and just normal hunger waves.

Once you have a solid foundation, you can begin building the framework of your day by evenly dividing calories throughout the day. The goal is to avoid a huge highs or lows in calorie intake throughout the day – you want an even amount of fuel coming into your system all day.

Snacks are a great way to round out a healthy plate. Research shows nutritious snacks that fit within your calorie range can help you achieve a healthy weight. Snacking wisely gives you the ability to fill in nutritional gaps, helps you avoid becoming too hungry, and sustains your energy. When in weight loss mode, snacks should mostly be fruits, veggies, or low-fat dairy products. Some great snack ideas include:

- **30 Grapes**
- **30 Grape tomatoes**
- **2 oz. Deli turkey and string cheese**
- **6oz plain Greek yogurt topped with 1 Tbsp. dried fruit**
- **2 celery stalks topped with 2 Tbsp. peanut butter**

Topping off your healthy plate you want to envision placing all the food you consume in one day on a large plate. Now, when you look at that plate it should be colorful and filled with a variety of foods. If you look at that plate and it's all beige you are probably eating too many carbs and junk food – liven it up with some colorful fruits and veggies. If you find the same foods filling your plate over and over, consider trying some new recipes or picking 1-2 new foods to try each week.

## **LET'S TALK HORMONES**

As mentioned above, in the first months after bringing baby home take the time to snuggle, rest, and allow your body time to heal and yourself time to adjust to the new schedule. Aside from childbirth, your body is still recovering from being pregnant for nine months producing new or more hormones and those don't go away overnight. For the past months your body has been in a "building" phase, so pushing more hormones into your system than normal. You probably felt some of the effects during your pregnancy, but many are not prepared for the impact these hormones can have on the body when you're no longer building.

For example, your body produces more progesterone (which is known for its mood boosting effects) during pregnancy and drop immediately after you give birth - this can be some cause of the baby blues. While progesterone dips, estrogen remains high and this can cause an imbalance leading to short-term adrenal fatigue. There's also an increase in relaxin, the hormone that allow the body to stretch and accommodate the baby that can remain in your system for a length of time after labor. This is why incorporating core strengthening moves in your routine are key for maintaining core strength.

## **PORTION CONTROL: The Key to Weight-Loss**

Keeping healthy foods on hand is the best way to follow all the nutrition guidelines set above. But we all know time can slip by and you forget to meal plan or can't quite make it to the grocery store, especially in those first few months. Knowing this, small, frequent meals may be best for mom. This allows you to keep consistent energy levels while not getting overwhelmed with meal prep but still meeting your nutrient needs. Keep in mind, your meals don't need to be Pinterest perfect to be healthy and yummy.

There are many things you must consider as a new mom and the priority is your baby. However, you will find that by choosing healthy foods, maintaining a healthy weight, and exercising on a regular basis will help you feel better mentally and physically. Creating a healthy lifestyle in a sensible and balanced way will also allow you to be a healthy role model for the child you are raising.

## **BREASTFEEDING BASICS**

Deciding how you will feed your baby is a decision every mom makes. There are proponents for both breastfeeding and bottle feeding but at the end of the day you need to do what's right for you and your family. The American Academy of Pediatrics, recommends exclusively breastfeeding the first six months of a baby's life, followed by breastfeeding in combination with offering solid foods until at least 12 months of age. This is all with the caveat of "as long as mutually desired by mother and baby."

If you do choose to breastfeed your baby there are a few nutritional considerations you should know about:

- **Drink your water:** Breast milk is made mostly of water and drinking enough liquid will help you maintain an adequate supply while also helping you feel your best. The Institute of Medicine recommends lactating women consume 3.8 liters of water per day. This equals about 16 cups. It seems like a lot, but there's more than just water that will help you reach your daily needs. Any non-caffeinated, non-sugary drink counts towards your 16 cup needs. Additionally, food contributes about 20%. Keeping a large water bottle with you to track how much you have consumed during the day.
- **Don't count calories... but don't go crazy, either:** To make one ounce of breast milk your body needs about 20 calories, so depending on how much your baby is eating you could be burning 500 to 1000 calories by simply feeding the baby. However, some moms see breastfeeding as an excuse to eat anything they desired. In the first months after giving birth, the focus should be on caring for your new one and - when it comes to food - eat to meet your appetite and choose a variety of foods. Once you

have a well-established milk supply, and are looking to shed pounds, you can do so by slightly reducing calories after the 6 week mark. The best advice to losing weight while breastfeeding is to weigh yourself once a week. If you aren't losing ½ - 1 pound per week you may not be hitting the right calorie goal (too much or even too little).

- **But really, how much do I need?** You may be the type who likes numbers and goals... so here you go. Every woman's needs vary but, for most, an additional 500 calories per day should be adequate for nursing moms to maintain their supply while also losing weight. Protein is a big deal in all diets, but especially for moms as your body is recovering from pregnancy and also providing nutrition for a rapidly growing baby. A breastfeeding mom should consume about 50 grams of protein or more per day. Most individuals do not have trouble meeting their protein needs. And if you are using our meal plan you will find the Pregnancy & Breastfeeding snacks already include protein.

However, here are some easy ways to up your intake:

- **1 glass milk = 8 g protein**
- **1 egg = 7 g protein**
- **¼ cup black beans = 4 g protein**
- **1 cup yogurt = 7-8 g protein**
- **2 T peanut butter = 7 g protein**
- **1 oz. meat = 7 g protein**

Overall, listen to your body, your healthcare provider and lactation consultant. Most hospitals have a Registered Dietitian on staff. He/she can provide a meal plan specific to your needs.