

PEDIATRIC CORNER

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Your breastfed newborn: They are what you eat.

As an expecting mother, everything you eat can have a direct effect on your unborn child. Surprisingly for some, even after your baby is born that link continues. Most people know that expecting moms who consume alcohol are also consuming for their unborn baby. For new moms who choose to breastfeed, this remains true throughout nursing. In the best interest of your infant maybe both mom and dad should avoid drinking alcohol. Mom because she can pass it through breast milk to your baby, and Dad should he get behind the wheel. If you must drink alcohol, drink just after you nurse rather than before. If this means before breakfast, schedule an appointment with your doctor immediately... ;)

The next prohibition is for Mom, and Dad, and everyone else. Never smoke around a baby, ever. Even though cigarette or cigar smoke does not pass in breast milk, the real danger is how secondhand smoke can damage their little delicate lungs. Secondhand smoke is dangerous to all children, but especially so for newborns. Research shows that smoke dramatically increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome ("SIDS").

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Avoid the temptations of caffeine. What keeps you awake keeps your baby awake. For us this was a challenge since coffee has become an American rite for the sleep-deprived. And, who are more sleep-deprived than new parents? A cup of coffee in the morning most likely won't harm your baby, however excess caffeine can result in poor sleep, nervousness, irritability, and poor feeding. This can be misdiagnosed as "colic" if your pediatrician isn't aware of your caffeine intake.

Unknowingly, Mom's otherwise healthy diet might make a breastfed tike fussy. Gassy vegetables such as cabbage, beans, broccoli, or spicy foods can sometimes cause intermittent "colic" like symptoms. Since babies with full-blown "colic" have the same symptoms the best way to differentiate a fussy food reaction from "colic" is to exercise a little detective work. Keep track of what you eat and how it affects your baby. I recall grandmother's wisdom. "If your baby shows symptoms every time you feed them a particular food, then stop feeding it to them."

In rare cases, a breastfed newborn might actually be sensitive to certain dairy products in your diet. These symptoms include diarrhea, rash, fussiness, and gas. Again, some detective work is in order. Cut out all dairy products from your diet. This includes dairy creamer, cheese, yogurt, and ice cream for two weeks. Then, add them back one at a time. If your baby becomes fussy, refer to grandmother's wisdom above.

Most medications are safe for breastfeeding, but some can be very dangerous. A good pediatrician will always ask you what you are taking. In our practice for example, one newborn was always sleepy. Once we discovered Mom was taking c-section pain medication, we recommended that she stop, as a result her baby became more alert. It is strongly recommended that you loudly proclaim what medications you're taking if you are breastfeeding. Always seek professional medical advice for any drug you might need to take, even over-the-counter. Remember, when breastfeeding, your child takes in what you take in.

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