

Infant nutrition misconceptions, part two

Bringing a new baby home raises the focus on their and mom's well-being. Toward the top of the list: what and how the child is being fed.

Whether you choose to breastfeed or use formula, misconceptions about infant nutrition are everywhere. Xandra Anderson, a certified lactation consultant at OSF HealthCare, cuts through the noise.

- Do I need to change what I put in my body while breastfeeding?

This covers a lot of ground, from a mom's diet to whether she should abstain from alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and medication.

- Diet: Healthy eating is always good. But Anderson says new moms generally don't have to change their diet for breastfeeding. If your diet is heavy on certain things (like garlic or dairy) and you notice your baby is extra fussy, you can try changing your meals. A provider may also want to test your baby for allergies.
- Alcohol and caffeine: Drink these in moderation and with precise timing, Anderson says.

"Babies are very sensitive to caffeine. If you have a cup of coffee and nurse right away, the baby is going to be awake for a lot longer than normal," Anderson says.

"That doesn't mean you have to not drink coffee. Just maybe not add three shots of espresso to your morning coffee," she adds with a smirk.

For alcohol, Anderson says the drink will filter out of your breastmilk like it filters out of your blood. So after having a couple of alcoholic drinks, wait two to three hours before breastfeeding or pumping.

"The breastmilk isn't ruined. You just need to give it time," Anderson says.

But here's a lifehack if mom feels full of breast milk and wants to pump right after having a drink: Go ahead and pump, and use the milk on your baby's acne or in their bathwater. Just keep it away from their mouth.

"It's antimicrobial. It's antibacterial. It's moisturizing," Anderson says, singing the praises of breast milk. "Our babies are in the most perfect environment in the womb. Once they're born, their world is cold, dark and dry. They can get dry skin, acne or cradle cap [greasy or flaky spots on the scalp]. Breast milk is a great way to prevent or heal those things."

- Medication and other health care issues: Anderson says most medication is safe to use while breastfeeding. In fact, it's important to stay the course – for example, with mental health medication – so you can be the best mom possible. Talk with your health care provider if you have questions.

If you have a medical procedure, also get advice from a professional. For example, Anderson says if you get a hepatobiliary iminodiacetic acid (HIDA) scan for a gallbladder concern, you'll be radioactive for around 24 hours. Don't breastfeed during that time. Or if your breasts feel full and you have to pump, dump the milk down the drain.

- Tobacco: Anderson admits it's tough to kick the habit. But she reminds moms: infants are very sensitive to nicotine. It can disrupt the child's sleep and feeding and even interfere with organ development. Secondhand smoke can increase the risk of a respiratory infection and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

If you're smoking with a new baby at home, do so *after* breastfeeding, then wait two to three hours before nursing again. Wear one jacket while smoking so you don't get an odor or residue on a lot of your clothes or the baby.

Learn more

Read more about how to have a successful pregnancy and following years on the [OSF HealthCare website](#).