



# Diet for Post-partum Mums

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**PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD MALAYSIA**

**ARTICLE**

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## Guilt-Free Diet for Post-partum Mums

You've had your little one and you're over the moon enjoying the little snuggles and cuddles. But what you're unprepared for is the hunger that comes after delivery. It seems like no matter how much or how often you eat, you're still always hungry! And because you're snacking so much to keep the hunger at bay, the weight you've put on during pregnancy just won't seem to budge no matter what you do.

Fret not, we have some postnatal diet tips without the guilt to get you eating healthily and get you back in shape.

### **1. Don't skip the carbohydrates**

It seems like every diet plan says skipping carbs is essential for losing the bulge, but did you know, carbohydrates are important for mums after delivery? It not only helps in breast milk production, but also in providing you with the energy you need, regulating hormones and your mental health. So, skip the low-carb or no-carb diets, and make sure you eat a healthy portion a day. It is recommended that 45-65% of your total calories should come from carbohydrates.<sup>1</sup>

However, not all carbohydrates are equal. Refined carbs do not provide lasting energy as it is digested easily and can cause a quick rise in blood sugar and trigger the pancreas to release insulin. Instead, add more complex carbohydrates into your diet such as oats, quinoa and sweet potatoes and avoid white bread and sugary biscuits as refined carbs can lead to weight gain.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Ensure proper nutrient intake**

If you're breastfeeding, proper nutrition is essential to provide the best for your child. A mother's need for iodine and choline increases during lactation, and it is recommended that breastfeeding mums consume around 290 mcg of iodine and 550 mg of choline daily at least for the first year postpartum. These nutrients can be found in dairy products, eggs, seafood and more.

Nutrients like protein, calcium and iron are important too for the postpartum mum to aid recovery. Maximise the amount of nutrition you consume per calorie with nutrient-dense foods such as nuts, legumes and berries.<sup>3</sup>

## **3. Watch the calories**

While non-pregnant women need around 1,600 to 2,400 kcal a day, it is recommended that breastfeeding mothers have an additional 330 to 400 kcals.<sup>4</sup> The numbers could be higher if you're breastfeeding more than one child.

It might be tempting to obsess over every single calorie of each food you consume,

but we recommend that you take it as a guide and instead focus on choosing your calories wisely. Instead of going for empty calories that might be more tempting like desserts, chocolates, fast food and sugary drinks, opt for healthier alternatives like fruits and grains and smoothies.

#### **4. Prepare healthy snacks ahead**

While it's tempting to reach out for a chocolate bar or biscuits to tide you over until your next meal, it is better to choose whole foods instead. Prepare snacks such as fruits, nuts or beans ahead of time as they are high in nutrients. Portion them out in small ready-to-eat containers for the same convenience you get from pre-packaged snacks and hide the unhealthy snacks away to limit the temptations. Having them conveniently packed will also encourage you to reach for it during days when you're busy handling your little one.

#### **5. Don't forget the fibre**

After delivery, there is an increased risk of constipation especially for mums who went through a Caesarean section and need pain medications.<sup>5</sup> It is recommended to choose more high fibre foods like fruits, vegetables and beans to help with bowel movements.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends consuming about 14 grams of fibre for every 1,000 calories you consume daily, which is around 24g of fibre for women.<sup>6</sup> An easy way to add extra fibre into your diet if you find it hard to consume enough is to add ground flaxseed into your meals and drinks.

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A healthy postpartum diet is important to nourish your body after a gruelling labour and delivery. Going on a diet doesn't have to be miserable, nor do you need to starve yourself. Just remember to eat a balanced meal that has all the essential nutrients you need.

## References:

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