

BREASTFEEDING ANTI- COLIC DIET

“Feed the mother to feed the child”

This is one of the leading tenets when understanding Chinese medicine and it has no more literal significance than in the world of breastfeeding.

There are some basic rules to keep the mothers diet healthy in the post-natal period and the underlying approach is to keep all foods gentle, warming and very nourishing. This involves slow-cooked foods such as soups and stews and avoiding too much raw food and anything cold – straight out of the fridge or freezer. Anything that is too hard to digest can be damaging to her more vulnerable and open body. Also, the baby’s digestive system is considered to be very underdeveloped and needs to be treated delicately in order for the baby to be allowed to create a strong gut for life.

We often add herbs such as ginger and cinnamon to her food as they are considered warming herbs and will ensure the breast milk is also “warm” and easier to digest.

The digestive system in Chinese medicine is referred to as the Spleen and Stomach system. It is responsible for digesting the food we eat, turning our food into energy and absorbing vitamins and minerals for our bodies to thrive. Understandably, if our digestive system is weak, it impedes our general health and body functions.

Newborn babies have just come out of an environment where they’ve had all their nutritional needs met directly from their Mum, not having to do any digestive work directly. Once they come out into the world, they can no longer rely on Mom for feeding them so directly. We say in TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) that the digestive system is developing for the first 6 years of a child’s life. Therefore, what we do in those first 6 years can contribute to building a strong foundation for a healthy, adaptable and thriving little one. Much of how their health is for life starts with those first few months of feeding.

A study found that when mothers cut some of the major known food allergens out of their diet (cow’s milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, and fish) 74% of the babies improved within one week (improvement equaled at least a 25% decrease in crying) which meant 3 hours less crying or more over a 48hr period. (*The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, Volume 96, Issue 6, Pages 886-892, December 1995 - <http://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749%2895%2970224-5/abstract>)

So what should mum avoid and what should she eat?

In the six weeks leading up to birth, we advise that she avoids the following foods and does so for the first 2-3 months of her baby’s life. From three months on, we recommend introducing the foods mum hasn’t eaten slowly, one at a time. The foods in the “avoid” category often cause tummy upsets for adults and are harder to digest, so it’s not hard to imagine that they could cause an issue for a newborn.

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Foods to be avoided

For 6 weeks prior to baby's birth and for the first 2-3 months after birth

- Berries
- Grapes
- Stone fruit
- Strawberries
- Mangoes
- Cabbage
- Peas
- Capsicums
- Tomato
- Turnip
- Lentils
- Garlic
- Melons
- Oranges
- Pineapple
- Lemon juice
- Broccoli
- Brussel sprouts
- Cucumber
- Lettuce
- Radish
- Cauliflower
- Raw onion
- Fish, Eggs and Dairy (these can be okay, it depends on your baby)
- Strong herbs and spices
- Powdered yeast
- Stimulants: tea, coffee, chocolate and alcohol

Foods to be eaten

For 6 weeks prior to baby's birth and for the first 2-3 months after birth

- Apples, custard apples
- Pears
- Avocado
- Asparagus
- Carrot
- Eggplant
- Root vegetables
- Corn
- Meat
- Papaya
- Bananas
- Sprouts
- Beetroot
- Celery
- Pumpkin
- Zucchini
- Mushrooms

Teas: Chamomile, Dandelion, Fennel and Cardamom

Soups & Stews: using organic free-range (where possible) animal bones, (chicken, beef, pork) to make a broth and using 2tbsp apple cider vinegar, will help bring calcium and other minerals out of the bones for your consumption.

Colic Recipe For Baby

(We've used this with countless clients and it always makes a difference)

12 Dill seeds (can be hard to find, just use Fennel if it's too hard)

12 Fennel seeds

Steep in 6 teaspoons of boiling water for 15 minutes.

Strain and give ½ teaspoon before every feed.

Make fresh daily.

Warming Beef Stew Recipe For Mum

Can be cooked in the oven, a slow cooker or a croc pot on the stove

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

1-1.5kg of Osso Bucco (organic where possible) the marrow is great for her kidneys

2 tbsp apple cider vinegar (this helps calcium and other minerals come out of the bones)

2 onions chopped

4 garlic cloves crushed

2 carrots chopped

500g baby mushrooms

4 sprigs of Rosemary

1 tbsp Italian parsley

A few splashes of red wine (the alcohol is burnt off during cooking)

Salt and pepper to taste

10 cups cold water

Method:

Brown off the onion, followed by the meat, then the mushrooms. Once they all have some colour add the carrots and cook for two minutes, stirring regularly. Add the wine, cold water and apple cider vinegar to the pot, scraping away any brown delicious morsels from the sides and bottom of the pot and keep them in the mixture.

Pull leaves off two of the sprigs of rosemary and you can leave the other two whole, up to you. Cover and bake on 180 degrees celcius for 1.5 – 2hrs, or until the meat falls off the bone. Alternatively, cover the pot, bring to the boil then put on a very low simmer for 1.5 to 2 hours.

Serve with the fresh parsley and have with brown rice or mash potato.



Breastfeeding on demand versus a schedule

If there is no problem with colic, or any other symptoms such as earache, cough, swollen glands, asthma, eczema (as these are related to poor digestion in Chinese medicine), then we would suggest breastfeeding on demand is appropriate.

However if there are problems, then a different strategy is worth trying. According to Chinese medical theory, the Spleen and Stomach needs time to take in the food slowly, time to digest it and time for the digestive organs to be clear of the food. If there is a lot of snacking, this can impede digestion in a bub who has issues with colic. You even know this yourself... if you don't have proper meals but heaps of snacks instead, it can certainly cause havoc and gas in your GIT.

You need to be careful that your bub isn't starving when giving a feed either as there is a tendency to gulp down the milk as well as many air bubbles and these bubbles in their little systems can cause gas and pain. By slowing down feedings and making them more frequent or on a schedule instead of an "on demand" system, the baby's digestive system isn't overwhelmed and they can digest what's there more comfortably.

As well as diet considerations, there is also effective baby massage techniques, acupressure for baby and acupuncture for mum.

In a recent study, it was found that giving mum acupuncture helped improved her baby's colic, which goes to show that the Chinese medical theory of "the mother feeds the child" is not just a nice philosophy, nor simply an emotional one, but one that has physiological relevance.

Acupunct Med doi:10.1136/acupmed.2011.010065
Infantile colic: exploring the potential role of maternal acupuncture
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<http://aim.bmj.com/content/early/2011/10/28/acupmed.2011.010065.abstract?maxto show=&hits=2&RESULTFORMAT=&andorexacttitle=and&andorexacttitleabs=and&fulltext=pregnancy+and+acupuncture&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1&usestrictdates=yes&resource type=HWCIT&ct>

Advice after antibiotics

Antibiotics are considered to be very cold energetically and are said to damage the Spleen and hence can be part of the cause of your baby's upset digestive system.

If the mother has been given antibiotics, for example, after a diagnosis of strepB in late pregnancy, or if her waters broke early, we recommend giving probiotics to both mother and baby to help repair the gut flora and assist healthy GIT function.

For the baby, we suggest a good quality baby probiotic such as Neocare. You can buy this from some local pharmacies, health food stores and from Red Tent. To get it into the bub, wet the nipple with milk and rubbing the baby probiotic powder around the nipple. This way, the probiotic gets sucked in with the feed. This usually needs to be done only once or twice daily. If the bub is still suffering then further treatment is needed.

If a newborn has been given antibiotics, we recommend the baby take probiotics using the method above and if possible getting a little moxibustion treatment or treatment with a tiger warmer to help warm the gut on their Stomach meridian.