

Top 10 Postnatal Superfoods



Quinoa

Quinoa is an ancient grain and a complete protein with all 9 essential amino acids – a great balanced choice for vegans and perfect for new Mum's as it supports the growth and repair of tissue. Quinoa is rich in lots of useful nutrients. It's a good source of iron which supports the transport of oxygen to the lungs and energy production. It contains sleep promoting tryptophan, is a good source of copper and manganese which help protect the body from free radicals and is a dietary source of fibre to contribute towards bowel health. Quinoa is also a good source of magnesium which helps relax blood vessels and muscles.



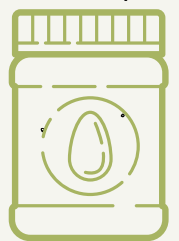
Cacao

Cacao is nutrient dense and full of phytonutrients. The seed of a fruit that is fermented, dried, roasted and then ground possessing strong antioxidant properties when used in its raw form. Cacao can be used to make a nourishing cinnamon hot chocolate or raw chocolate bites if a new Mum needs a pick me up treat without reaching for a bar of Dairy Milk! Many studies have shown its benefits on cardiovascular health due to its role as an anti-inflammatory.(1)



Nut butter

Nut butters & nuts – a healthy nut butter with no added salt or sugar is an ideal food to incorporate into a new Mum's diet. It offers fibre, healthy fats, protein and vitamins and minerals. This in turn helps keep you full and gives you energy to keep you going for longer. There are a wide variety of nut butters available now. They will all differ slightly, but you can experiment with different flavours to add onto toast or apple slices, into smoothies or made into raw chocolates and energy balls. Try almond, cashew, walnut and macadamia as an alternative to peanut.



Bone broth

Bone broth or stocks contain lots of amazing healing elements like gelatine which contributes to the healing of the gut lining. Although there has not been a lot of research conducted on this new superfood there are definitely added benefits including providing a warming and hydrating drink or soup, perfect for a breastfeeding mother, with added nutrients such as iron, vitamin D and C. You can make your own by boiling meat or fish bones (meat flesh as well if making a stock) with vegetables and apple cider vinegar. Be sure to use organic meat to avoid antibiotics. Keep some in the freezer in smaller containers for you to defrost when needed.



Salmon

Salmon provides us with a good protein source for energy and is a perfect brain food because it's an excellent source of Omega 3 fats, which are important for the brain development of a foetus, plus performance and disease prevention in adults. Our brain consists of 60% fat and EPA and DHA from oily fish are involved in the synthesis and function of the brain neurotransmitters and messengers. Children deficient in omega 3 have been found to suffer from hyperactivity, learning disorders and behavioural problems. (5)
In postnatal mother's omega 3 has been shown to encourage blood flow to the brain and reduce inflammatory markers which lead to postnatal depression.(6)



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BERRIES

Berries are high in antioxidants, vitamin C and fibre but are a low GI food which means they will not raise your blood sugar levels as much as other fruits and food. This is important in the postnatal period because due to lack of sleep blood glucose levels are harder to stabilise. Eating foods which are low GI and slow releasing carbohydrates ensures blood sugar levels are more stable. This in turn will help with fatigue, hunger and mood. Antioxidants are disease fighting compounds which are important in the healing process of postpartum recovery (7)



EGGS

Eggs – a low cost but high quality protein source, make sure to buy organic free range. They provide iodine and selenium needed for thyroid hormone metabolism, which can be affected by loss of sleep in new Mums so its important to support them from dietary sources. Eggs also provide choline important in brain health and chemical messenger signalling. Eggs also contain lots of other helpful nutrients needed for overall health but if you suffer with high cholesterol you may need to limit your intake. (8)



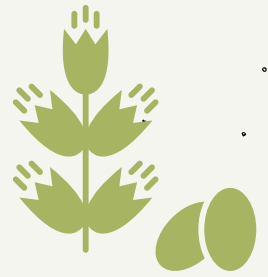
Avocados

Avocados are rich in the monounsaturated fat, oleic acid which can play a part in improving insulin sensitivity. They are also a great source of fibre, folate and potassium which are important in a maternal diet and often lacking. (6) Avocados are packed full of unique antioxidants which help fight against free radical damage. A study in 2016 found "fibre, monounsaturated fats, and lipid-soluble antioxidants, which have all been linked to improvements in maternal health, birth outcomes and/or breast milk quality".



Chia Seeds

Chia seeds are a rich source of minerals needed for bone health – calcium, magnesium and phosphorus. Women experience bone loss during lactation even with good calcium levels so consuming chia seeds may help in replenishing calcium levels alongside a healthy balanced diet(5). They are also a great source of fibre to help combat constipation and are my go-to ingredient to put into smoothies and energy balls to consume after the birth of your baby to aid frequent bowel movements. Check out my Afterbirth Smoothie recipe on my blog at www.seednutrition.space.



Oats

Oats contain a certain type of fibre called beta glucans which can stabilise blood sugar levels and prevent a sharp rise in glucose levels. Porridge is a great choice for breakfast in the morning. Oats are also a good source of protein which can work in the promotion of healing after childbirth. They also contain sleep promoting tryptophan and energy producing vitamin B1.



1. Nutrition facts and functional potential of quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa* willd.), an ancient Andean grain: a review - PubMed (nih.gov)
2. Chocolate and Its Component's Effect on Cardiovascular Disease - ScienceDirect
3. Essential fatty acids and human brain - PubMed (nih.gov)
4. Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid supplementation in prevention and treatment of maternal depression: Putative mechanism and recommendation - PubMed (nih.gov)
5. Long-Term Dietary Intake of Chia Seed Is Associated with Increased Bone Mineral Content and Improved Hepatic and Intestinal Morphology in Sprague-Dawley Rats (nih.gov)
6. The Role of Avocados in Maternal Diets during the Periconceptional Period, Pregnancy, and Lactation - PubMed (nih.gov)
7. Bioactive Compounds and Antioxidant Activity in Different Types of Berries - PubMed (nih.gov)
8. Egg consumption and heart health: A review - PubMed (nih.gov)

