A physician's advice; as in the pseudo-Pythagorean treatise on this subject, the nurse is thought to pass her character on with her milk.

(18) ... To be sure, other things being equal, it is better to feed the child with maternal milk, for this is more suited to it, and the mothers become more sympathetic towards the offspring, and it is more natural to be fed from the mother after parturition just as before parturition. But if anything prevents it one must choose the best wet-nurse, lest the mother grows prematurely old, having spent herself through the daily suckling.\[1\] ...

(19) One should choose a wet-nurse not younger than twenty nor older than forty years, who has already given birth twice or thrice, who is healthy, of good constitution, of large frame, and of a good colour. Her breasts should be of medium size, lax, soft and unwrinkled, the nipples neither big nor too small and neither too compact nor too porous and discharging milk overabundantly. She should be self-controlled, sympathetic and not ill-tempered, a Greek, and tidy. And for each of these points the reasons are as follows:

She should be in her prime because younger women are ignorant in the rearing of children and their minds are still somewhat careless and childish; while older ones yield a more watery milk because of the atony of the body. In women in their prime, however, every natural function is at its highest. She should already have given birth twice or thrice, because women with their first child are as yet unpractised in the rearing of children and have breasts whose structure is still infantile, small and too compact; while those who have delivered often have nursed children often and, being wrinkled, produce thick milk which is not at its best.

[She should be healthy because healthful] and nourishing milk comes from a healthy body, unwholesome and worthless milk from a sickly one; just as water which flows through worthless soil is itself rendered worthless, spoiled by the qualities of its basin. And she should be of good constitution, that is, fleshy and strong, not only for the same reason, but also lest she easily become too weak for hard work and nightly duties with the result that the milk also deteriorates. Of large frame: for everything else being equal, milk from large bodies is more nourishing. Of a good colour: for in such women bigger vessels carry the material up to the breasts so that there is more milk. And her breasts should be of medium size: for small ones have little milk, whereas excessively large ones have more than is
necessary so that if after nursing the surplus is retained it will be drawn out by the newborn when no longer fresh, and in some way already spoiled. If, on the other hand, it is all sucked out by other children or even other animals, the wet-nurse will be completely exhausted...

The wet-nurse should be self-controlled so as to abstain from coitus, drinking, lewdness, and any other such pleasure and incontinence. For coitus cools the affection towards the nursling by the diversion of sexual pleasure and moreover spoils and diminishes the milk or suppresses it entirely by stimulating menstrual catharsis through the uterus or by bringing about conception.

In regard to drinking, first the wet-nurse is harmed in soul as well as in body and for this reason the milk also is spoiled. Secondly, seized by a sleep from which she is hard to awaken, she leaves the newborn untended or even falls down upon it in a dangerous way. Thirdly, too much wine passes its quality to the milk and therefore the nursling becomes sluggish and comatose and sometimes even afflicted with tremor, apoplexy, and convulsions, just as suckling pigs become comatose and stupefied when the sow has eaten drugs.

[She should be] sympathetic and affectionate, that she may fulfil her duties without hesitation and without murmuring. For some wet-nurses are so lacking in sympathy towards the nursling that they not only pay no heed when it cries for a long time, but do not even arrange its position when it lies still; rather, they leave it in one position so that often because of the pressure the sinewy parts suffer and consequently become numb and bad. Not ill-tempered: since by nature the nursling becomes similar to the nurse and accordingly grows sullen if the nurse is ill-tempered, but of mild disposition if she is even-tempered. Besides, angry women are like maniacs and sometimes when the newborn cries from fear and they are unable to restrain it, they let it drop from their hands or overturn it dangerously. For the same reason the wet-nurse should not be superstitious and prone to ecstatic states so that she may not expose the infant to danger when led astray by fallacious reasoning, sometimes even trembling like mad. And the wet nurse should be tidy-minded lest the odour of the swaddling clothes cause the child's stomach to become weak and it lie awake on account of itching or suffer some ulceration subsequently. And she should be a Greek so that the infant nursed by her may become accustomed to the best speech.

(20) At the most she should have had milk for two or three months. For very early milk, as we have said, is thick of particles and is hard to digest, while late milk is not nutritious, and is thin. But some people say that a woman who is going to feed a male must have given birth to a male, if a female, on the other hand, to a female. One should pay no heed to these people, for they do not consider that mothers of twins, the one being male and the other female, feed both with one and the same milk. And in general, each kind of animal makes use of the same nourishment, male as well as female; and this is [no] reason at all for the male to become more feminine or for the female to become more masculine. One should, on the other hand, provide several wet-nurses for children who are to be nursed safely and successfully. For it is precarious for the nursling to become accustomed to one nurse who might become ill or die, and then, because of the change of milk, the child sometimes suffers from the strange milk and is distressed, while sometimes it rejects it altogether and succumbs to hunger.
Notes:

Cf. the similar advice in Plutarch, *Moralia* 3c-d.