

Information for breastfeeding families

Weaning Your Breastfeeding Baby



The American Academy of Pediatrics, and other authoritative organizations, suggest exclusive breastfeeding for six months. Then, begin adding solid foods but continue breastfeeding for at least a year or longer, if agreeable to your baby and to you.

Weaning can be easy or difficult. First, make sure it is what you want. If you are wavering, your baby can sense that and be confused by your ambivalence. When it has been such a warm, loving experience, it is sometimes hard to let that go and move on to the next stage. So think it through and if you are really sure, then you will send clear messages to your baby.

Mother-led Weaning

Mother-led means you decide when the time is right. Drop one breastfeeding (or pumping session) per week and replace it with a formula feeding or solid foods. If you are breastfeeding 5 times each day, then it would take 5 weeks to completely wean.

This is a slow gentle way for your baby to be transferred to another methods of feeding and for you to reduce your milk supply. Some mothers like to keep one feeding for a longer period of time, such as a bedtime feeding.

You may accelerate this schedule if necessary by dropping one feeding every 2-3 days. If your breasts become engorged, use ice to your breasts at the end of feedings. Restricting your fluids and a tight bra may also help during this time.

Baby-led Weaning

Baby-led means your baby loses interest and weans himself. This may happen around 6-9 months as your baby becomes more active and involved in new skills. Follow your baby's lead.

Don't offer, don't refuse

Do not offer a breastfeeding, but breastfeed whenever your baby "asks". Offer formula or solid foods at regular feeding times.

Post-pone Weaning If:

- Baby or mother is sick or hospitalized
- Family is traveling, during holiday periods or other period of unusual stress
- Baby is teething
- Mother has mastitis
- Baby is in a growth spurt

You may experience a sense of sadness and loss during weaning. This is partly due to the loss of this close relationship, and partly due to the change in hormones from breastfeeding. Observe your breasts for lumps, and "hot spots". Massage them during several feedings until they go away. You may hand express milk or use a breast pump at any time that you are uncomfortably full. If you develop a fever, red tender area or lump that will not go away, contact your physician.

Sage or peppermint tea, peppermint candy (natural flavor) and parsley may help reduce supply. You may also apply cabbage leaves to your breasts several times per day .