

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, as desired by baby and by 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 method 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 begin around 6-9 months as you begin introducing solid foods and continues as a gradual process over the next months. Follow your baby's lead!

### **Don't offer, don't refuse (for toddlers)**

After about 1 year of age, do not offer a breastfeeding, but feed whenever your baby "asks". Offer meals at regular feeding times.

## ***Post-pone Weaning If:***

- Baby or mother is sick or hospitalized
- Family is traveling, during holiday periods or other times 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 feedings until they go away. You may hand express milk or use a breast pump at any time that you are uncomfortably full just to relieve the fullness. If you develop a fever, red tender area, or lump that will not go away, contact your Provider. Sage or peppermint tea, peppermint candy (natural flavor), and parsley may help reduce supply. You may also apply ice or cabbage leaves to your breasts several times per day .