

# Mother-Led Weaning

How long a mother chooses to breastfeed her baby depends upon many factors. It is recommended that a baby be exclusively breastfed (no solids or formula) for approximately 6 months, with breastfeeding to continue for at least 12 months, or longer, if desired by mother and baby. The longer a mother breastfeeds, the greater the benefits for both mother and child. However, some babies will wean themselves before 12 months. And, some mothers find they must wean their baby before their baby is interested in weaning. If this is the case, the following information may be helpful:

- If at all possible, wean slowly, over a period of weeks. This is easier for both your body and your baby.
- Drop one breast feeding at a time. Choose the feeding (time of day) that your baby is least interested in breastfeeding. Depending upon your baby's age, offer a bottle or cup of pumped breast milk or formula, or solids, to replace the breast feeding. Breast milk or formula should remain the primary food in your baby's diet throughout the first year.
- If your baby refuses to take the bottle, cup or solids from you, have someone else offer the replacement feeding.
- Every 3 to 5 days, replace one more feeding. Early morning, nap time and bed time feedings are often the most difficult breast feedings for a baby to give up.
- If your breasts are very full and uncomfortable, you may try to shorten a feeding before you give it up completely. This may allow your breasts more time to adjust.
- Increase cuddling time with your baby. Once you decide to give up a feeding, stay the course unless you change your mind and decide not to wean for now. Otherwise, it may be confusing to your baby that one day he or she can nurse and the next day he or she cannot.

## If Sudden Weaning is necessary:

- When your breasts feel uncomfortably full, pump for 5 to 10 minutes. Remove only enough milk from your breasts to slightly soften them. This may be easier with a pump, rather than removing baby from your breast when he or she is not finished or satisfied.
- You may apply cold packs to your breasts to reduce pain and swelling. You may also take ibuprofen or acetaminophen for comfort. Wear a snug bra for comfort and support.

**MilkWorks**  
LINCOLN & OMAHA



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information:



[www.milkworks.org](http://www.milkworks.org)

- You may take pseudophedrine (an over the counter decongestant such as Sudafed), which decreases the levels of the hormone that makes milk and can help decrease production faster. Be aware that this medication is a stimulant and has the potential to affect your sleep. Most people can tolerate one or two doses per day. Sage extract or tea is an herbal alternative to suppress milk production.
- Continue to remove only enough milk to slightly soften your breasts until your breasts are no longer hard and firm and uncomfortable. Some women will continue to produce small amounts of milk long after they have stopped pumping or nursing. Try to avoid “checking” for milk. The more stimulation your breasts receive, the longer they will produce milk.