

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 six months, with breastfeeding to continue for at least 12 months, or longer, if desired by a mother and her baby. The longer a mother breastfeeds, the greater the benefits for both mother and baby. 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. In either of these situations, the following information may be helpful.

- **If possible, wean slowly, over a period of weeks.** This is easier for both your body and your baby.
- **Drop one breastfeeding at a time.** Choose the feeding that your baby is least interested in. Depending upon your baby's age, offer a bottle or cup of pumped milk or formula, or solids, to replace the breast feeding. Breast milk or formula should remain the primary food in your baby's diet until baby is one year old.
- **If your baby refuses to take a bottle, cup, or solids from you, have someone else offer the feeding.**
- **Every three to five days, replace one more breast feeding with pumped milk, formula, or solids.** Early morning, nap time, and bedtime breast feedings are often the most difficult for a baby to give up.
- **If your breasts are very full and uncomfortable,** you may try to shorten a breast feeding before you give it up completely. This may be difficult for your baby but may allow your breasts to adjust.
- **Increase cuddling time with your baby, but 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 can be confusing for your baby that one day they can nurse and the next they cannot.

If Sudden Weaning is Necessary:

- **When your breasts feel uncomfortably full, pump for five to ten minutes.** Remove only enough milk from your breasts to slightly soften them. This will be easier with a pump, rather than removing your baby from your breast when they are not finished or satisfied.
- **You may apply cold packs to your breasts to reduce pain and swelling.** You may also take ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) for comfort. Wear a snug bra for comfort.
- **Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) is an over the counter decongestant which decreases the hormone that makes milk** and can help decrease milk 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 a day. Sage extract is an herbal alternative to suppress milk production. If you must wean immediately for medical reasons, Cabergoline (a prescription medication) can be taken.
- **Continue to remove only enough milk to slightly soften your breasts only until your breasts are no longer hard and firm and uncomfortable.** Some women will continue to produce small amounts of milk long after they stop pumping or nursing. Try to avoid "checking" for milk. The more stimulation your breasts receive, the longer they will produce milk.

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