

Breastfeeding: General Weaning Tips

There is no right way or right time to wean. You will know when the time is right. As you wean, congratulate yourself on giving your child the very best nutritional start in life!

This sheet is meant to help you feel more comfortable while you wean. It is from the Lactation Management Service of Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Please call us at (414) 266-1757 with any questions you have.

How do I wean from pumping?

You can wean as quickly or as slowly as you want. You may choose to wean all at once, or wean slowly over time until you stop making breast milk.

To wean quickly:

- Only express, or massage out, a small amount of milk when you feel full. Pump or express only as often as you need to for comfort.

To wean more slowly:

- If you were breastfeeding or pumping 8 to 10 times a day, you may want to slowly wean over a number of days.
- Skip two feedings or pumping sessions each day. Skip one in the morning and one in the evening. Then skip 1 or 2 more sessions each day or so, until you are no longer pumping at all.
- To start, take a warm shower or bath, or use warm compresses on each breast for 5 to 10 minutes. Next, pump just enough milk to provide comfort.
- It is normal to have some milk for weeks, months, or even longer after weaning.

How do I wean from breastfeeding?

Weaning may be started by mom, baby, or both. You may choose to completely wean. Or you may want to partially wean which means you may breastfeed as little as once a day. The slower the weaning, the more comfortable it will be for both mom and baby. These things will also help:

- If your baby is less than 12 months old, you will need to replace breastfeeds with bottle/cup feeds of pumped breast milk or formula.
- Replace one breastfeed with one bottle/cup feed once every few days.
- Delay a breastfeeding a little longer each day until that feeding is missed.
- Shorten time at the breast during a feed. You may then need to offer a bottle/cup after breastfeed. Do this until the entire breastfeed is replaced by bottle/cup feed.
- Breastfeed only when your child asks. Do not offer and do not refuse the breast. Encourage other activities at normal nursing times. Do not wear breast accessible clothes.

How can I help my baby be more comfortable while wean?

- It is best not to start if you or your baby is sick. If there is a change in baby's routine or major changes in household routines, this also may be a bad time to start.
- First, drop the breastfeed that the baby is least likely to demand or want.
- Replace a breastfeed with another comforting activity such as reading a book, etc.
- Wean the bedtime or naptime breastfeeds last. Replace with other comfort routines.
- Avoid familiar nursing routines such as positions/holding or a certain chair, etc.
- Listen to your child. Let them guide the weaning process.

How can I be more comfortable while wean?

- Wear a comfortable but supportive bra that is not too tight.
- Ice your breasts with bags of crushed ice, a bag of frozen peas or corn, or ice packs for 10 to 20 minutes. This will reduce swelling and give you relief. Do not eat the frozen vegetables once they have been thawed.
- Use a pain reliever such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- You can use pseudo ephedrine (Sudafed®) to help decrease your milk supply.
- If you are leaking, use nursing pads to soak up the milk and keep you dry.
- Salt can cause the body to retain fluids. Limit salt in your diet until the feeling of fullness is gone.
- Do not limit your fluids.
- If your breasts get full, it is good to express some milk until you feel comfortable. As your milk supply lowers, so will the need to do this.

What if I am not ready to wean but my baby is? Can I still pump and feed breast milk to my baby?

Yes you can, but first make sure that your baby is not on a nursing strike. If your baby suddenly refuses to nurse or breastfeed, it may be a nursing strike. These are often confused with baby's wish to wean on their own. It is not likely that a child under the age of one year will wean on their own. Call the Lactation Management Service at (414) 266-1757 for more tips.

If you feel your baby is truly ready to wean on their own, you can still pump and feed this milk to your baby in a bottle or cup. When you are ready to wean, follow the steps listed above.

ALERT: Call your doctor, nurse, Lactation Management Service (414) 266-1757) if you have any questions or concerns.

- Call your primary health care provider if you have signs of a possible breast infection (mastitis). Signs include:
 - Chills and/or fever.
 - Body aches, breast pain or tenderness.
 - Flu like symptoms.
- Tenderness, redness or warmth in the breasts.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for you and your baby. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.