

Weaning From the Breast - Normal

Definition

- Weaning is the replacement of feedings from the breast with drinking from a cup or bottle. It means an end to feeding at the breast.
- Weaning usually occurs easily and smoothly.
- Weaning is harder if the breast has become overly important to the child.

Goal: Natural Weaning at 9-12 Months

- Children normally show less interest in breastfeeding between 9 and 12 months of age. They lose interest in the breast if they are also taking cup and spoon feedings.
- Many children start weaning themselves by 12 months.
- After the age of 12 months, the parent often has to start the weaning. The child will usually be receptive.
- After 18 months of age, the child usually resists weaning. This is because she has become overly attached to the breast.
- For easy weaning, have a goal of finishing by 12 months.
- If you desire, you can also continue pumping breastmilk. Use your pumped milk in a cup for a baby older than 9 months. For a younger child, you can use pumped milk in a bottle.
- For babies under 12 months, you can also use formula if pumped milk not available. For babies over 12 months, whole milk can be used to wean.
- The AAP recommends mothers breastfeed (or use pumped milk) until 12 months. After 12 months, they recommend continued nursing "if you and your baby desire it". The AAP does not state any deadline for weaning in nursing mothers.

Care Advice

Natural Weaning: How to Promote

1. **Breastfeeding the First Month:**

- During the first month, expect your baby to feed every 2 to 3 hours. This is usually about 8 - 12 times/day.
- Awaken her to feed if 3 hours have passed since the last feeding during the day.
- At night, awaken if 4 hours have passed since the last feeding.

2. **Avoid Excessive Breastfeeding After the First Month:**

- After the first month, if your baby is gaining weight well, feed on demand. Do not feed if less than 2 hours have passed. Do not awaken for feedings.
- After 2 months, do not feed if less than 3 hours have passed. Exception: cluster feeding during growth spurts at 3 months of age.
- After 6 months of age, keep breast feedings to 4 times a day. Be sure 3 of them are given at mealtime with solids. Your baby can have the fourth feeding before he goes to bed at night.
- Don't breastfeed for between meal snacks.
- Don't nurse to sleep at bedtime or naptime.
- Stop all night feedings by 6 months.

3.

Introduce an "Educational Bottle" at 1 Month:

- This is ideally done at 4 weeks old and after nursing is well established.
- Use pumped breastmilk or 1 ounce of formula. Do this once a day. In this way, he gets used to the bottle and the artificial nipple.
- Once your baby accepts bottle feedings, use them at least every 3 days. Reason: He continues to accept milk from a bottle.
- The longer you wait to introduce the bottle after 1 month, the more strongly your infant will initially reject it. If you wait until 2 months of age, it may take several weeks for your baby to accept the bottle.
- Bottle acceptance allows you to leave your baby with Dad or a sitter. It's also essential if you plan on returning to work outside the home.

4.

Hold Your Child for Crying:

- Hold and comfort your child without feeding if she's upset and not hungry. This can foster a strong sense of security and trust when she's upset.
- If you always feed your child in these instances, your child may learn to eat whenever she is upset.
- She may also be unable to separate being held from nursing. You may become an "indispensable mother."

5.

Don't Let The Breast Substitute for a Pacifier:

- Learn to recognize when your baby just needs to suck. At these times, offer a pacifier instead of milk.
- Feeding your baby everytime he needs to suck can lead to excessive weight gain.
- After teeth come in, a teether may be helpful.

6.

Don't Let The Breast Become a Security Object at Bedtime:

- Your child should be able to go to sleep without having the breast in her mouth.
- Place your baby in the crib drowsy but still awake.
- Don't breastfeed or hold until asleep.
- She needs to learn how to put herself to sleep. If she doesn't, she will develop sleep problems. These problems will require your presence during the night.

7. Introduce a Sippy Cup at 6 Months of Age:

- Exposure to cup feedings will make weaning easier.
- Delaying cup feedings past 9 months makes your child less willing to try them.
- At first, offer the cup after he has sucked some from the breast. This might be the only way your child will accept the cup.
- By 9 months of age, offer pumped milk from a cup before breastfeedings. You can also use formula for introducing the cup.
- If you stop breastfeeding after 9 months, you may be able to wean your baby directly to a cup.
- **Caution:** Wean a baby younger than 9 months to a bottle and not to a cup. Babies cannot drink well enough from a cup at this age to get enough nourishment.

8. Introduce Baby Foods (Solids) from a Spoon at 6 Months:

- Starting foods earlier is not recommended for breastfed babies. It's not needed for growth and can cause gagging.
- Delaying solids past 9 months runs the risk that your baby will refuse solids.
- Finger foods can be introduced whenever your child develops a pincer grasp. This is usually between 9 and 10 months of age. Once your child can use finger foods, include her at the table during mealtime. She will probably become interested in the foods that she sees you eating. As a result, she will want to have other foods as well as nursing.

9. Start Phasing Out Nipple Feedings After About 9 Months of Age:

- Do this anytime your child shows a lack of interest in the breast. You can offer formula or pumped breast milk in a cup instead.
- Children normally show less interest in breast feedings between 9 and 12 months of age.
- You can tell that your baby is ready to begin weaning when:
 - She refuses the breast.
 - Nurses for only a few minutes and then wants to play.
 - She becomes more interested in the world around her than breastfeeding.
- Don't miss this window of opportunity for child-led weaning.

Call Your Doctor Back If...

- You think your child is not able to give up the breast
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

This handout is intended for informational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the care and advice of a medical professional. The accuracy of the information contained in this handout is not guaranteed and there may be variations in treatment that your doctor or nurse may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

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