



IMPORTANT

· Be sensitive to your own needs and your baby's needs during this time.

Breastfeeding Weaning

What is weaning?

- Weaning begins when the baby takes anything other than breast milk and ends with the last breastfeeding.
- It is a natural stage in a baby's development.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding for healthy term infants for 6 months.
- The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends breastfeeding for two years and beyond.

Types of weaning:

- "Natural weaning" is letting the baby set the pace for weaning.
- "Planned weaning" refers to the mother deciding to stop breastfeeding before receiving cues from her baby that he/she is ready to stop.
- "Abrupt weaning" is when the breastfeeding has to stop immediately; while this may be unavoidable in some situations, it is the most difficult situation for the mother and the baby.

Tips for Planned Weaning:

- Explore your feelings about weaning.
- Be flexible and sensitive to the baby's needs and feelings.
- Introduce the baby to a bottle or cup.
- Eliminate one nursing every few days to allow the mother's milk supply to decrease slowly without fullness and discomfort.
- Space out the feedings that are being eliminated every 2-3 days; for example, for the first few days stop the last morning nursing and then a few days later, stop an evening nursing. Replace these nursings with bottle or cup.
- Gradual weaning may take several weeks or months depending on the mother's flexibility and the age of the child.
- La Leche League recommends a slow weaning

technique called “don’t offer, don’t refuse”.

- The first nursing of the morning and the last nursing of the day are often the last feeds to be eliminated as they are usually the baby’s favourite feeding times.
- Continue to drink to thirst; restricting fluids will not prevent engorgement
- If weaning from breast milk takes place before 12 months, a commercial formula should be used.

Tips for Abrupt Weaning

- Explore your feelings about weaning.
- The age of the baby will determine what the mother substitutes for breastfeeding and how it is given.
- Run warm water over the breasts in the shower and let them leak, or soak breasts in warm water by lying down in the tub.
- Relieve breast fullness with the breast pump or manual expression; pump/express only enough to relieve fullness. This may need to be done for 1-3 days or longer until the mother’s breasts become comfortable.
- Wear a firm-support bra.
- Offer baby extra cuddling and holding at this time.
- “Dry-up” medication is no longer recommended as it may have serious side effects.
- It may take several days before breasts feel comfortable.
- If the breasts are uncomfortably full, some mothers find it helpful to use cold cabbage leaves on their breasts.
- Pain can also be relieved by using an anti-inflammatory/analgesic.
- It is normal for the breasts to contain milk for several weeks to months.