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WEANING FROM BREAST TO CUP

When should I begin weaning?

Weaning from breast to cup is dependent on your baby's need to suck and his ability to drink from a cup. A baby is usually receptive to weaning between 9 and 18 months. If your baby is less than 9 months old, you should wean him to a bottle first. When your baby is 6 months old, you can start introducing the cup, but wait to completely wean your baby until he is about 9 months old.

What kind of milk should I use?

You can put breast milk that you have pumped and stored in the cup. You can also use formula in the cup. If your baby is over 12 months you can start using regular whole milk.

If you use formula:

- watch carefully how your baby tolerates the formula. Look for rashes, spitting up, and/or bowel problems. If any appear, you should consult your doctor and ask if you need to change formulas.
- use iron-fortified formula until the baby is at least 1 year old to avoid iron-deficiency anemia.

How do I wean my baby?

- **Take your time.** Give your baby a chance to get used to the idea of a cup. At about 6 months old (or older), you can begin offering an occasional cup of breast milk, formula, or juice just to introduce the concept that drinks can come in another container. Plan ahead and give yourself and your baby plenty of time. Gradual weaning gives your baby time to adjust. It also allows your milk supply to diminish gradually and saves you from engorged breasts. Some mothers experience a mild depression when weaning as a result of changes in hormones related to their milk production. This is especially likely to happen if the weaning is done quickly.
- **Start small and increase the amount of milk.** When you are ready to wean, you can start offering your baby a cup with 1/2 oz. of milk or formula at every meal. After the meal, nurse your baby. Juice should not be used as a replacement for milk at feedings. Gradually increase the proportion of milk your baby takes from the cup. When your baby is taking 3 to 4 oz. of milk from the cup, you can eliminate a breast-feeding session (usually breakfast or lunch).
- **Eliminate 1 feeding at a time:** After eliminating one nursing session, wait 5 to 7 days before eliminating another to give your baby a chance to adjust. The early morning and late evening nursing sessions are usually the most difficult for your baby to give up. Wean the baby from these last. You will soon learn which feedings are your baby's least favorite and when his appetite is generally lowest. Replace these nursings first.

If your baby is taking a daily total of 16 to 20 oz. of milk by cup, in addition to 3 meals of solid food, he can be considered successfully weaned.

What if my breasts become engorged?

If your breasts become engorged because you are no nursing as much, allow your baby to suck 15 to 30 seconds from each breast to relieve your discomfort. Make sure that you don't nurse any longer, however, or you will trigger your breasts to produce more milk--and the engorgement will get worse.

What if I have problems with weaning?

Setbacks in weaning can be caused by many things, including stress, major changes in meal or bed times, or illness. If such setbacks occur, wait until the situation improves or the illness is over, and then continue the weaning process. Call your baby's doctor if you have any questions or concerns.