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WEANING FROM BREAST TO BOTTLE

When should I begin weaning?

If you need to or want to stop breast-feeding, it is best to wait until your baby is at least 4 weeks old. If you are going to use breast milk in the bottles instead of formula, it is best to wait until your baby is at least 4 weeks so that your milk supply is well established and you can effectively pump your breast milk.

If your baby is older than 9 months, he or she is probably ready to wean straight to a cup rather than to a bottle.

How much and how often should I feed my baby?

The amount of formula or breast milk that most babies take per feeding (in ounces) can be calculated by dividing your baby's weight (in pounds) in half. For example, if your baby weighs 8 pounds, your baby will probably drink 4 ounces of milk per feeding. No baby should drink more than 32 ounces of milk a day. If your baby needs more than 32 ounces and is not overweight, consider starting solid foods. Overfeeding can cause vomiting, diarrhea, or excessive weight gain.

Babies generally need:

- 5 to 6 feedings per day for 1 to 3 month old babies
- 4 to 5 feedings per day for 3 to 7 months old babies
- 3 to 4 feedings per day from 7 to 9 month old babies

If your baby is not hungry at some feedings, increase the time between feedings.

If you are using formula:

- Be sure to watch carefully how your baby tolerates the formula. Look for rashes, spitting up, and/or bowel problems. If any appear, you should ask 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.

If you are using breast milk:

- Make sure you have enough breast milk pumped for each bottle feeding and that you store and warm the milk properly.
- Pump your breasts around the time you would have nursed your baby. That way you can maintain a good supply of milk.

How do I wean my baby?

- **Take your time:** 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 too quickly.
- **Hold your baby:** Hold and cuddle your baby while giving him a bottle. Try to make bottle feeding as warm and comfortable as nursing was. Don't prop your baby up with a bottle in an infant seat and leave. Bottle feeding also gives the fathers, brothers, and sisters a chance to feed and relate to the baby and it spreads out the work!
- **Eliminate 1 feeding at a time:** The speed of weaning will depend on your baby. In general, however, it is best to substitute the bottle for one nursing session at a time. After you have replaced a nursing session with a bottle, wait 5 to 7 days. Then, if the baby is adjusting well, substitute a bottle for another nursing session. 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 not 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 my baby resists the bottle?

Your baby will probably resist at first. Stay calm and go slow. Touch the baby's lips with the nipple. Do not force the nipple into her mouth. Let your baby draw the nipple in. If your baby is not upset by the bottle, you can move the nipple into the mouth further.

You may want to try putting breast milk in the bottle at first before trying formula. Your baby may not be as resistant to a familiar drink.

Choose a time to introduce the bottle when your baby is slightly hungry and will be more willing to try. Do not try the bottle when your baby is very hungry because he is likely to become upset and frustrated.

Do not spend more than 10 minutes at a time trying the bottle so you and your baby do not get too frustrated.

For more information see:

[Introducing a Bottle to a Breast-Fed Baby](#)

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. Please call our office if you have any questions or concerns.