Breastfeeding, when to Stop

If you can, nurse your baby exclusively for at least 6 months, giving no other food or drink besides breast milk. Anticipate problems you may face. If you are planning on going back to work after a month or two, decide how you will continue breastfeeding.

- You may choose to extend your maternity leave.
- Leave work periodically to nurse during the day.
- Have the baby brought to you during your breaks, to breastfeed.
- Work part-time or at home.
- Pump and store milk while you are at work.
- Mechanical breast pumps (which can be rented or purchased) make it possible for most women to mix mothering, work, and daycare.
- After the first 6 months, begin introducing solid foods, but continue breastfeeding for as long as you and your baby enjoy it.
- When you decide it is time to wean your baby, begin giving breast milk or formula in a bottle or cup.
- Most experts recommend that weaning begins gradually, taking place over several weeks or even months. The more gradual the process, the easier it will be for you and your baby.

There are many reasons a mother should stop breastfeeding, such as:

- The baby has galactosemia (*metabolism disorder*). The baby needs a non-lactose formula.
- The mother is taking illegal drugs.
- The mother has a herpes virus infection on the breast.
- The mother has T-cell lymphotrophic virus Type I or II.
- The mother has active tuberculosis, and is not being treated.
- The mother has AIDS.
- The mother is receiving radioactive medicine or materials.
- The mother is receiving chemotherapy or antimetabolites.

THINKING ABOUT WEANING

There are no "hard and fast" rules about when breastfeeding should stop. Different organizations have different recommendations. Weaning is a natural part of growing up.

WHO (World Health Organization)

- The WHO recommends that infants be exclusively breastfed (receive only breast milk) for the first 6 months of life. Infants may be given solid foods in addition to breast milk beginning at 6 months of age.

La Leche League

- The La Leche League is a group that offers support to breastfeeding women. It sets no time limit on breastfeeding. It supports the recommendations of the AAP, but goes on to say that the longer a mother nurses her baby, the better. If you and your child enjoy breastfeeding, there is no reason to stop. Experts here suggest letting your child wean naturally, gradually growing out of breastfeeding.

AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics)

- The AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life. They say that babies should begin receiving solid foods, in addition to breast milk, around 6 months of age. Breastfeeding should then continue for at least the first year of life, and beyond as long as desired by the mother and her baby.

Most of this information is courtesy of the La Leche League.

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