

Weaning From Breast to Bottle

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.

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.

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 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.