

## Guidelines for Weaning Your Baby: Key Tips and Advice



### Highlights

Weaning is when you stop breastfeeding, and it can happen at any time after breastfeeding has begun.

Weaning can be parent-led or baby-led, depending on the situation.

The process involves replacing breast milk with other fluids.

Gradual weaning allows time for both baby and mother to adjust.

Rapid weaning may be necessary in certain cases but should be done carefully, especially for younger babies.

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## **What is weaning?**

Weaning is when you stop breastfeeding your baby or toddler. It is a natural process, and all growing children go through it, but it can sometimes be a difficult time. Weaning can happen at any time, whether shortly after birth or when your child is older. Most children are weaned by the age of 3 years, but it is a personal choice, and you can breastfeed for as long as you and your child would like.

## **How is weaning different from introducing solids?**

Weaning is when you stop breastfeeding your baby and replace breastfeeds with another fluid, such as expressed breast milk, formula, or milk (depending on your baby's age). Weaning is different from introducing solids. Introducing solids is about giving your baby solid food, while weaning replaces breast milk with other fluids.

## **Different ways to wean your baby**

Weaning can take place in two ways:

**Parent-led weaning:** This happens for various reasons, such as problems with breastfeeding, another pregnancy, medical issues, going back to work, or simply deciding it's the right time.

**Baby-led weaning:** This occurs when your baby stops showing interest in breastfeeding.

## **How to wean your baby gradually**

Start by stopping the breastfeed your baby seems least interested in. Gradually stop other breastfeeds. This process can take a few days or longer, depending on how you and your baby cope. Express breast milk when needed to stay comfortable. Check for lumps in your breasts daily, and massage them to avoid mastitis. Use paracetamol, cold packs, and a snug-fitting bra to alleviate any breast pain.

## **Rapid weaning**

Rapid weaning might be necessary for certain reasons, but it's important to note that medicines that stop milk production are more effective if you haven't been breastfeeding for long.

For babies younger than 12 months: If your baby is less than 12 months, replace breastfeeds with formula. Babies fully weaned before 12 months need about 600 mL of formula daily.

For babies older than 12 months: Toddlers can have cow's milk, about 1 to 1 1/2 cups (250 to 375 mL) a day. No toddler formulas are needed.

### **What to do if your baby doesn't want to wean**

If your baby is finding weaning difficult, try the following tips:

Offer only one breast at each feed.

Offer formula before breast milk (if transitioning to formula).

Offer solids before breastfeeding (if your baby is over 12 months old).

Spend plenty of time with your baby during the transition.

### **Tips for weaning your toddler**

To make weaning easier for you and your toddler, try the following tips:

Explain to your toddler that breastfeeding will stop soon.

Stop the early morning feed by getting dressed before your toddler wakes.

Keep feeding times consistent.

Discourage long feeds.

Wear clothing that makes it harder for your toddler to access your breasts when you're out.

Change the bedtime routine if you've always fed your toddler to sleep.

Have your partner help settle your toddler if they wake during the night.

### **Where to get more information about weaning**

For information and advice on weaning, you can contact:

Your midwife

A lactation consultant

## **Tools and Assistance**

Lactation consultant: To support your breastfeeding and weaning journey.

Parenting resources: For more guidance on managing weaning and its challenges.

Support groups: For connecting with others going through similar experiences.