



How Do I Wean My Baby?

Are you really ready to wean completely? Sometimes just cutting back on the amount of times you breastfeed will make you feel better. Breastfeeding is a two-way street. If you resent it most times you sit down to breastfeed, your child will pick up on this. If your baby is under a year (or older, sometimes), you will have to substitute a bottle feeding for a missed breastfeeding. An older baby may accept a drink from a cup, a nutritious snack, or just a distraction in the form of a game, a toy, or change of scene. Remember, the first supplemental feed, from a bottle, or of solid food, is the beginning of weaning.

If weaning is your decision, it's best for you and your baby to do it gradually, and with love. If you wean "cold turkey," your breasts will likely become painfully engorged, and you might develop a breast infection. Your baby will probably fight the switch from your warm, soft breast to a plastic substitute. He might mourn the loss of "his" breasts.

To wean a baby under a year, substitute his least favorite feeding first. If the baby won't accept the bottle from you, (he knows the breast is right around here somewhere!) see if Daddy or Grandma can succeed. Let the baby have a few days (or weeks, if possible) between each time you substitute a breastfeeding session with a bottle. Express a little milk from your breasts, to your own comfort, if you become engorged. Don't express a whole feeding's worth of milk; just take the pressure off. Your body will get the signal to make less milk over time.

Do you want to wean a baby who is about a year, or older? You may not need to go to bottles at all. All you may need to do is stop offering the breast. "Don't offer, don't refuse" may work for you. Or, learn to substitute a cup of water, juice or cow's milk (if tolerated), or solid food, for the baby or toddler's least important feeding. Sometimes Dad (or another relative) can help by taking the baby to the kitchen for a good breakfast--Daddy style. This can become a special time for both of them. (And you get some extra sleep!) For mealtime feeds, try to offer food first, with a short session at the breast for later. Avoid sitting down in your special favorite "nursing chair." If your child won't nap without breastfeeding, sometimes a car ride will get him or her to sleep.

The nighttime feeding is usually the last to go. Make a bedtime routine not centered around breastfeeding. A good book or two will eventually become more important than a long session at the breast. Your child may agree to rest his head on your breast instead of feeding. Talk to your child about what's going on. He may understand more than you think.

A lot of extra love and attention in other forms will be needed now. Try getting out more, to the playground, a friend's house, shopping, museums, anything your child will be distracted with and stimulated by. Read stories, rub or scratch their little back, sing and dance. It's a whole new stage in your growing child's life. You will still be needed, just in different ways.

A useful resource is *The Nursing Mother's Guide to Weaning* by Kathleen Huggins and Linda Ziedrich.

Our FAQs present information from La Leche League International on topics of interest to parents of breastfed children. Not all of the information may be pertinent to your family's lifestyle. This information is general in nature and not intended to be advice, medical or otherwise. If you have a serious breastfeeding problem or concern, you are strongly encouraged to talk directly to a [La Leche League Leader](#). Please consult health care professionals on any medical issue, as La Leche League Leaders are not medical practitioners.

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