



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 then 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 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 (ounces) of formula or breast milk that most babies take during each feeding can be estimated 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 talk with 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. Slow weaning gives your baby time to adjust. It also allows your milk supply to lessen slowly 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 more 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. Bottle-feeding also gives the fathers, brothers, and sisters a chance to feed and help care for 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 give a 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 doing well, give a bottle for a second nursing session. Do this until giving a bottle has replaced all nursing sessions. 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 my baby resists the bottle?

Your baby will probably resist at first. Stay calm and go slow. Touch the baby's lips with the bottle nipple. Do not force the nipple into his mouth. Let your baby draw the nipple in. If the bottle does not upset your baby, 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.

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

*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.