

## HOW LONG SHOULD I BREASTFEED MY BABY?

Some mothers breastfeed for a few weeks, some for a few months, and others for a few years. Any amount of breastfeeding is good for you and your baby.

Doctors recommend breastfeeding for at least a year, or until you or your baby decide that it is time to stop. Breastfeeding your baby for one year or longer has many benefits, including:

- protection from many illnesses.
- the best source of nutrition for growth and brain development.
- comfort and cuddling for emotional health and well-being.

### **Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs for the first six months**

If and when you decide to wean, wean slowly. This helps your body adjust to making less milk.

Some babies wean between 12 and 24 months.

Others breastfeed on and off for three or four years.



Breastfeeding is a warm and loving way to meet the needs of toddlers, too!

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## Hints for weaning slowly

If your baby is **younger than 6 months**:

- replace one feeding at a time (every 3-5 days) with iron-fortified formula.

If your baby is **6 months or older**:

- replace one feeding at a time (every 3-5 days) with baby foods or iron-fortified formula, depending on your baby's age and readiness.
- solids and a cup can be introduced at 6-8 months.
- iron-fortified formula is recommended until baby is one year if breastmilk is not being provided.

## Hints for weaning quickly

Sometimes something happens (illness or accident) and a mother needs to wean quickly.

- Hand-express or pump a small amount of milk. It's important to remove only enough milk to relieve fullness because removing too much milk will make you produce more.
- Put cold packs on the breasts to relieve pain and reduce swelling.
- Wear a supportive bra for comfort.

## Other helpful hints for weaning

- Increase cuddling time — your baby will still find comfort wrapped in your arms.
- When weaning a toddler, keep them busy with activities and playtime.
- Gradual weaning helps prevent breast engorgement so you are more comfortable.
- Expect some milk production for a few or even many weeks after weaning is complete.

***A lot of people will give you advice about weaning. It's important to remember that:***

- breastfeeding your older baby will not “spoil” him or her.
- getting teeth does not mean the end of breastfeeding.
- toddlers benefit from breastfeeding — baby's age is not a reason to wean.