



Women's, Infants, and Children  
Supplemental Nutrition Program

Department of Public Health  
City and County of San Francisco

# Weaning Your Baby From Breastfeeding

---

The time you choose to wean your baby from the breast is a personal choice based on your needs and your lifestyle. You can still breastfeed your baby even when you return to work or school.

If you want to keep breastfeeding, you can pump your milk while you are away from your baby. Another option is to breastfeed at night and have your baby drink formula while you are away.

If you have questions or concerns about weaning, be sure to ask a WIC staff person. The WIC Program recommends that you breastfeed for as long as possible.

Whenever you choose to stop breastfeeding, it is most comfortable to do it a little at a time, over many weeks.

## ***To Begin Weaning***

---

- Skip one nursing every day. Weaning your baby may take several weeks.
- Choose a nursing time that is **less** important for the baby. Babies often like bedtime, naptime and early morning nursings the most. So don't skip these feedings, at first.
- Instead of breastfeeding, give your baby a cup to drink from. If your baby is less than 6 months it may be easier to drink from a bottle. The cup can contain:
  - ◆ formula with iron (if the baby is less than a year old)
  - ◆ whole cow's milk (if the baby is older than a year)
- Keep up this pattern for a few days or a week. Then choose another nursing time to skip and use a cup (or bottle) instead until your baby is completely weaned.



## ***For Your Comfort***

---

- Even if you wean gradually, your breast may still become swollen.
- Apply ice packs over a towel on the breast when you are not breastfeeding. This will help reduce the swelling. Or wet 2 disposable diapers and put them in the freezer for 15-30 minutes. Use in place of ice packs.
- If your breasts become too full, express just enough milk to feel comfortable.
- Wear a bra all the time, even to bed. Also, do not touch your nipples a lot as this will produce more milk.





- Take Tylenol® or Ibuprofen® to relieve discomfort.
- Weaning may take weeks.** If done too fast, you may get a breast infection (mastitis). Watch for red, painful, breast lumps; call your doctor if you have them.
- Offering a bottle is easier if you follow some simple steps:
  - Have someone else (not the mother) offer the bottle.
  - If possible, have the mother in the other room, even hearing her voice around meal time might distract the baby.
  - Give the baby the bottle in a different position from breastfeeding. For example hold the baby facing away from the feeding person. After the baby has learned to accept a bottle you can use the cradle position for feeding so you can see her face.
  - Do not prop the bottle up; someone needs to hold the bottle all the time so that the baby does not choke. Leaving your baby alone with a propped bottle is dangerous.



**For breastfeeding questions, pump loans, classes, or other help, call your WIC Clinic.**

Standards for participation in the WIC Program are the same for everyone regardless of race, religion, national origin, color, sex, political beliefs or handicaps. Persons believing they have been discriminated against may write to: Secretary of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C. 20250.

Developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health WIC Program, Rev., 8/2002.