

Breastfeeding and the Older Baby



Breastmilk is all the food a baby needs for the first 6 months. After that, small amounts of solid foods can be added. Babies are generally healthiest when they are breastfed until at least their first birthday.

Growth Spurts

All babies need more milk as they get bigger. Growth spurts are times when your baby is growing very fast. For many babies this happens around:

- 7 - 14 days
- 4 - 6 weeks
- 3 months
- 5 - 6 months



Your baby will want to breastfeed more often for about 48 hours. Don't limit how long or how often your baby breastfeeds during a growth spurt. By feeding often during this time, your milk will be built up.

Even though the baby is hungrier, it does not mean that you can't make enough breastmilk. Keep feeding often and don't give up!

Teething/Biting

Many mothers are concerned about biting during breastfeeding. It is not necessary to wean when your baby starts teething. There are ways to discourage biting. The most common method is to:

- Immediately take the baby off the breast when the biting occurs.
- Gently but firmly say "no".
- Wait 30 seconds before putting your baby back on the breast.
- If the baby bites again, repeat the above steps, but wait a whole minute before putting back on breast.

Another method is to pull the biting baby *closer* to the breast. This will cause the baby to let go of the breast.

Starting Solids

Breastmilk is the only food your baby needs for the first 6 months. Your baby will be ready for solids when:

- there is head and neck control
- food is swallowed instead of being pushed out of mouth
- baby can sit up with support



Unless your doctor tells you differently, do not start solids before your baby is 6 months old.

- Starting solid foods too soon can cause constipation, diarrhea, gas, spitting-up or food allergies.
- Baby needs to learn to eat from a spoon. Do not give solids in a bottle or other feeder. They make the baby overeat.

Start new foods slowly, 1 new food every 3 - 4 days.

- Begin with cereal, then vegetables, fruits, and finally meats and proteins.
- Stop a food if your baby develops a rash, has diarrhea or gets fussy.

Even though solid foods provide vitamins and nutrients, breastmilk should be a key part of your baby's diet for at least one year.

Weaning

The switch from breastmilk to solid foods is called weaning. More important than when you wean is that you wean slowly. Remember that for you and your baby, the breast is a wonderful place to eat, sleep and cuddle.

When you decide to wean your baby:

- Replace one feeding at a time with solids or liquids. This is based on your baby's age.
- Replace one daily feeding every 3 to 5 days until weaning is complete.
- Increase cuddling time. Your baby can still find comfort and safety in your arms.
- Distract a toddler with games or other activities.
- Expect some milk production for as long as 4 - 6 months after weaning is complete.



Distracted Baby

Older babies become more aware of and interested in the world around them. Sometimes they will want to look around during feedings, coming on and off the breast. This is not necessarily a problem, though feedings can be longer because baby wants to be more social.

To cut down on distractions, try feeding in a quiet darker place. Older babies may or may not like having a blanket over their heads while breastfeeding. Limit loud or distracting sounds by having "white noise" in the background - a running washer, dryer or vacuum cleaner or soft music.

Nursing Strike

Sometimes a baby will suddenly stop breastfeeding. This is called a 'nursing strike' and tends to happen between 8 and 11 months. Reasons for a nursing strike can include:

- Changes in breastmilk taste and amount (if mother becomes pregnant or starts birth control methods with estrogen).
- Baby exploring and learning that they refuse to settle down for breastfeeding.
- Baby dislike of new soaps, perfumes, deodorants or other products mother has started using.
- Baby (and maybe mother) unusually distracted or stressed.

Encourage baby back to breast by:

- Holding baby quietly in skin-to-skin contact and gently snuggle.
- Trying different breastfeeding positions.
- Offering the breast when baby is sleepy or just waking.
- Get milk flowing early in a breastfeeding session by expressing milk just before and using massage during a feed.

If baby (or mother) gets frustrated or upset, take a break and just snuggle.



Breastfeeding Welcome Here

For more information on breastfeeding, talk with your Nutritionist, Nurse or Breastfeeding Peer Counselor and the Lactation Consultant at the hospital where you had your baby.

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