How long should I breastfeed my baby?

- There is no set time. You and your baby decide when weaning is right for you.
- Doctors recommend no other food, just breastmilk, for the first six months.
- Doctors recommend that babies breastfeed for one full year or longer. Breastfeeding for a year or longer helps protect your child from diseases such as diabetes, obesity, Crohn's disease, leukemia, and food allergies. Breastfeeding longer also increases your baby's brain growth and may help him perform better in school later on.

How long does breastmilk meet my baby's nutritional needs?

Breastmilk

- changes to meet your baby's needs as he grows and develops. The milk your body produces is just right for the age of your baby.
- satisfies all of your baby's nutritional needs during the first six months of life.
- continues to give your baby most of his nutrition after he begins eating solid foods, until age 1.
- continues to give your baby good nutrition and protection against disease after your baby is 1 year old.

BreastMilk 100% Natural Ingredients

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WIC Growing Healthy Families

TEXAS Department of State Health Services

Weaning from the Breast

How do I wean my baby from the breast?

Weaning your baby slowly makes it easier for your baby to give up the breast and helps your breasts get used to not making milk. Giving your baby extra cuddles and kisses helps, too.

Partial weaning

As your breastfed baby gets older, he will not nurse as often as he did as a newborn. Your baby will nurse even less when he begins eating solid foods at about 6 months of age. This is when natural weaning begins.

Breastmilk is the healthiest food for your baby. However, you may choose to partially wean your baby from the breast. You may give your baby both formula and breastmilk. To partially wean, use the following tips:

- Replace your baby's least favorite breastfeeding with a cup or bottle feeding. Nursing less will slow your milk production.
- After two or three days, replace another breastfeeding with a cup or bottle feeding. Continue this pattern until you reach the desired number of breastfeedings and cup or bottle feedings a day.

Some mothers wean early because they worry about

- not making enough milk.
- taking medications or having surgery.
- teething.
- friends pressuring them to wean.

If you have questions or concerns, or if you and your baby decide it is time to wean, call your local WIC counselor for help.

If you wean before your baby is one year old, your baby will need formula. Ask your WIC nutritionist about the kind of formula your baby needs.

- If your breasts become too full between breastfeedings, express only enough milk to relieve the fullness and soften your breasts.
- Nurse when your child asks, but do not offer the breast.

Complete weaning

If you must completely wean, continue replacing another breastfeeding with a cup or bottle until all feedings are replaced.

Abrupt weaning

Abrupt weaning can cause discomfort if your breasts become too full. Binding the breasts or taking medication to dry up the breasts can have serious side effects. If you must wean abruptly because of special circumstances, talk to a WIC breastfeeding counselor or a lactation consultant. She will help you find the most comfortable way to wean suddenly.

Weaning your toddler

- Toddlers need extra cuddling during weaning.
- If you and your toddler have a special chair or place in your home where you nurse, avoid this area for a while. When your toddler sees you there, this will remind him of nursing.
- Distract your toddler when he asks to nurse by playing a game or going for a walk.
- Postpone nursing until "later." Give a cup of water, juice, or milk if your toddler is thirsty.