

### **Stopping Breastfeeding-Weaning**

Everyone has their own ideas about when you should wean your baby. What is the right age? That depends on you and your baby. Here are some facts to keep in mind:

- Any amount of breastfeeding is better than none at all. However, the longer you breastfeed, the more health protection your baby receives. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends mom's milk only (no formula or baby foods) for the first 4-6 months of life and mom's milk plus baby foods after 4-6 months. If you wean too early, protective benefits of mom's milk will be less.
- Weaning is a gradual process. It begins when you start adding other foods. It ends when the baby is completely off the breast.
- The worldwide average for weaning is 3 years old! AAP provides a 'healthy baby' guideline: breastfeed at least one year. Breastfeed even longer . . . as long as you and baby desire.
- Breastfeeding is good for babies and toddlers. Breastfeeding does not make toddlers overly dependent. It makes them feel loved and secure! Toddlers may only breastfeed 1-2 times a day.
- Some babies get fussy during weaning. Be patient and give extra love and attention in place of breastfeeding.

### **There are three types of weaning:**

- **Baby-Led Weaning** -baby starts losing interest in breastfeeding
  - Some babies start weaning themselves between 10 to 12 months old. Many babies want to breastfeed much longer. Baby-led weaning can be a sad time for some moms. Remember, your baby still loves you; they are just growing up! If your baby begins to wean on their own, don't offer the breast but don't refuse it if they want to breastfeed. Replace missed feedings with formula if your baby is younger than a year old. If your baby is older, give whole or 2% milk.
  - A baby who suddenly refuses to breastfeed may be going through a nursing strike. This may also happen when a baby is teething or ill. It does not mean your baby wants to wean. If your baby has a nursing strike, call for help.
- **Mother-Led Weaning** – Mom started losing interest
  - Wean slowly! It will help avoid plugged ducts and breast infections. Your baby will also adjust better to the change. Begin by eliminating the feeding your baby wants the least. Replace this feeding with formula if your baby is younger than one year or with whole milk if your baby is over one year. After 4 to 7 days, replace another feeding. It should be from a different time of day such as a morning feeding, then an afternoon feeding. Continue replacing one feeding per day, every 4 to 7 days.
  - If you have trouble getting your baby to take a bottle or cup, have someone else offer it. If your baby won't sleep, have someone else rock the baby to sleep. If your breasts become hard and painful, you are probably weaning too quickly. You may express some milk by hand or with a pump for comfort. If you express too much milk, you will increase your milk supply.
- **Abrupt Weaning** – an emergent, unexpected situation arises where Mom must wean
  - Abrupt weaning should only be done in an emergency as it is uncomfortable for you and hard emotionally for the baby. It can lead to a breast infection or abscess. Express a little milk to relieve the pressure. Use ice packs to reduce swelling. Do not bind your breasts.