

# Weaning your breastfed child

## What is weaning?

Weaning is the gradual process of stopping breastfeeding. This is a natural stage in your child's development.

## When should I wean my child?

Breastfeeding provides nutrition and comfort to your child at any age. There is no need to stop at a certain time. The World Health Organization, Health Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society all recommend that **breastfeeding should continue for 2 years and beyond.**

Many children will wean on their own between 2 and 5 years of age. Some families decide to stop breastfeeding before their child has weaned on their own.

## How can I make weaning easier for my child?

Weaning may be a difficult time if your child does not yet want to stop breastfeeding. Here are some ways to make this easier.

- Take it slow. Gradually reduce the number of times you breastfeed in a day.  
Start by stopping one feeding that is not before a nap or bedtime. Instead of breastfeeding at that time, distract your child with another activity.  
Wait at least 3 to 4 days and then stop another feeding.

Continue stopping one feeding every 3 to 4 days (or longer) until your child is no longer breastfeeding. Keep in mind that morning, nap and nighttime feedings will likely be the last to go.

- Consider partial weaning. Gradually cut back feedings to a number that you are comfortable with. This helps when you want to stop breastfeeding at night (if your child is more than 1 year old) or when you are away from your child during the day (such as going to work or school).

**When you reduce breastfeeding, make sure your child's nutrition needs are met in other ways.**

- Change it up. Keep situations that your child associates with breastfeeding to a minimum. For example, breastfeed in different places than usual.
- Plan new ways to comfort your child and settle them to sleep. It may take some time before your child can go to sleep easily without breastfeeding.
- Move around. Your child will nurse briefly, instead of having a long breastfeeding session.
- Don't offer the breast to your child, but don't refuse. Let your child breastfeed if they ask.
- Keep your child busy with activities such as outings, reading or crafts. When your child is bored, they are more likely to want to breastfeed.
- If your child is older, you may want to involve them in choosing the date to wean and planning a way to celebrate this stage in their development.



Your child may want to breastfeed more when they are sick, hurt or feel stress (such as when routines or caregivers change). It is best to breastfeed as usual during these times. Your child needs comfort and your breastmilk may help them get better.

If your child is having a lot of difficulty, they may not be ready to wean. You may want to continue breastfeeding and try weaning again later.

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There are many people who can answer questions or help you at home.



Some choices are:

- ☎ a La Leche League leader
- ☎ a lactation consultant
- ☎ a public health nurse
- ☎ your doctor or midwife