



**Baby Bonds**

# *Weaning Guide*



# Weaning



Melanie Henstrom, IBCLC  
www.babybonds.us

***There is no right or wrong time to wean, if it is what is right for your family.***

**Note:** No matter which strategy you choose, remember a child under the age of 1 will need breastmilk or formula to meet their nutritional needs.

## Parent-Led Weaning 3 Strategies

1. Replace Nursing Sessions 1 by 1
  - a. Choose the least favorite nursing session to eliminate.
  - b. It is the least likely to cause stress on you or the child.
2. Trial Weaning
  - a. Switch the baby from breastfeeding to bottle feeding using expressed milk or formula.
  - b. You may want to pump a week or two to make sure the transition is successful.
3. Stop Trying to Make Breastfeeding Work
  - a. Nothing is done to encourage milk production or breastfeeding.
  - b. Bottles and sippy cups may be given.

## Society-Led Weaning

1. Society-Led Weaning is weaning dictated on a time schedule by society as a whole.
2. This has been described by anthropologists as occurring between 2- 7 years of age. Typically the weaning process is marked by rituals and celebration.
3. This type of weaning can be seen within individual families to some degree, with babies nursing for a specified timeframe before the family dictates it is time to mark the end of the breastfeeding journey.
4. Typically this is associated with milestones such as 6 months, 12 months or 2 years.

## Child-Led Weaning 3 Types

1. Babies Under 1 Year
  - a. Some babies exhibit behavior that seems like they aren't interested in nursing (for example, Nursing Strikes)
  - b. Babies at a year of age are so busy and not already interested in nursing.
  - c. Some parents use this time to be done, and that's completely acceptable.
2. Toddlers
  - a. Young toddlers rarely try to wean themselves, but the relationship may be child-dictated instead of parent offered.
3. Self-Weaning
  - a. Gradual process over several weeks
  - b. The child no longer needs the nutritional aspect of breastmilk or supplemental milk.
  - c. They are independent and confident to move on from comfort nursing.



**Scan to Schedule  
a Weaning Consultation**

# Weaning

## Night Weaning



There is a lot of emphasis on babies sleeping through the night despite night wakings being normal well through toddlerhood. Nighttime nursing continues to function to stimulate milk supply and to meet the nutritional needs of a growing baby, who can consume almost a quarter of their milk intake at night.

The decision to night wean should be based on balancing breastfeeding and the family's overall needs, not on outside pressures making a normal childhood behavior seem pathological.

Night weaning is appropriate for babies over 6 months of age, who are consistently gaining weight well IF the family is disrupted by the night wakings. Night weaning can be done in a variety of ways, but there are consistent principles that allow you to help support your baby's needs while changing the nursing pattern.

Melanie Henstrom, IBCLC  
www.babybonds.us

### Common Strategies Include:

- Providing more opportunities for milk and food intake during the day to help meet the baby's nutritional needs without the need for nighttime nursings
- Having the non-breastfeeding parent comfort the child during night wakings to help break the pattern of needing to nurse to fall back asleep
- Using clothing or sleeping spaces to make night nursing less convenient for the child to gently discourage it
- Substituting other comfort measures for nursing during night wakings
- Explaining that nursing is unavailable at night to an older toddler (at least 15-18 months of age).



Scan to Schedule  
a Weaning Consultation

### What if it isn't working?

If night weaning is not working for a family, but the sleep disruptions are too much, it might be worth considering changing sleep routines to allow for the nighttime nursing to take place in a safe sleep environment to allow for more rest for the breastfeeding parent.

# Weaning



Melanie Henstrom, IBCLC  
www.babybonds.us

## Drying Up the Milk Supply

### So how long does it take to dry up the milk supply?

There is unfortunately no set answer for this, each person's body responds differently to weaning, and some will lose their milk supply rapidly but others take much longer.

Typically, it takes a few weeks to bring milk production to an end, but it can be done more rapidly.

If you need to wean rapidly, you would greatly benefit from a weaning consultation to make sure you are able to help avoid clogs, mastitis, and manage the engorgement that will occur with rapid weaning.

Often times, if rapid weaning is medically indicated, a health care provider will be consulted to help with the medicinal options for drying up the milk supply.



### Here are some basic strategies to assist your body in reducing your milk supply:

#### Foods and Herbs

- Peppermint candies like Altoids (natural peppermint flavor)
- Sage or jasmine tea. Begin with ½ cup tea daily and increase gradually until results are seen
- Peppermint tea 2-4 cups per day until results are seen
- Tea Designed for Milk Supply Reduction (Earth Mama Brand or Pink Stork get positive reviews)
- Parsley, cilantro, or sage in food

#### Apply cabbage treatment to reduce engorgement:

- Wash chilled **green** cabbage leaves and gently score the surface of the leaf to release juices
- Wrap leaves around breast & areola
- Leave on 20-30 minutes, repeat 3-5 times per day.

#### Apply cold compresses to reduce engorgement.

#### Medications to discuss with your doctor if other measures are ineffective in reducing milk supply:

- Pseudoephedrine
- Vitamin B6
- Oral Contraceptives containing estrogen.

Scan to Schedule  
a Weaning Consultation



# Weaning



Melanie Henstrom, IBCLC

[www.babybonds.us](http://www.babybonds.us)

## Commonly Asked Questions

### How Do I Wean Without Getting Mastitis?

Weaning without getting mastitis requires active management of engorgement.

There is a fine line between allowing controlled milk stasis to down-regulate the milk supply and engorgement, which can lead to inflammation and infection.

Pumping or hand-expressing just to comfort, and comfort measures such as cold compresses and cabbage leaves can help allow the milk supply to dry up without getting mastitis.

Special caution should be taken if there is existing nipple damage or trauma at the time of weaning.

This greatly increases the change of infection. It may be prudent to heal the nipples before weaning when possible to reduce this risk.

### How Do I Wean a Toddler Cold Turkey?

Abrupt weaning of a toddler can be very traumatic, difficult, and should be avoided if at all possible.

Sometimes, however, this is what is right for your family. You may want to have the other parent step in to take care of the child for a few days, or to allow the child to stay with friends or family to help with the worst of the transition.

Attention to the emotional needs of the child is very important during this time, and opportunities for physical comfort should be readily available.

Offering favorite foods and beverages can help ensure proper intake while the child is transitioning from breastfeeding.

### How Do I Wean an Attached Toddler?

When weaning an attached toddler, gradual weaning while replacing nursing sessions with a different form of close parental interaction, as well as an alternative food source is the best strategy to manage the shift.

If your toddler is over 15-18 months, explaining that nursing is unavailable may help the child to understand the new routine without feeling rejected or abandoned.

### How Do I Wean and Choose a New Milk?

If your baby is less than 12 months, your baby should only receive breastmilk or infant formula.

If your baby is over 12 months and eating solid foods well, your baby actually does not need a replacement milk.

The calcium, protein, and fat needs for your baby can be met by offering a well-rounded diet.

Scan to Schedule  
a Weaning Consultation



# Weaning

## Child & Parent Emotional Considerations



Melanie Henstrom, IBCLC  
www.babybonds.us

### Is it Post-Weaning Depression?

Post-weaning depression and depressive symptoms are common, but they are not discussed frequently enough. Weaning is a time of change to the physical relationship you share with your baby, and a time of hormonal shifts.

Normal symptoms associated with weaning:

- Feeling tearful or sad
- Showing signs of depression
- Feeling Irritable
- Feeling Anxious
- Mood Swings

These symptoms are typically fairly mild, do not impede quality of life, and resolve within a few weeks. If your symptoms are severe or persistent please contact your Health Care Provider to discuss options for treatment.

### Reasons you might want to consider temporarily postponing weaning:

- Baby or mother is sick or hospitalized
- Family is traveling, during holiday periods or other period of unusual stress
- Baby is teething
- Mother has mastitis
- Baby is in a growth spurt

Weaning during these times is much more likely to feel traumatic for mother and baby, and contributes to negative child reactions to weaning and maternal depression associated with weaning.

A common concern about weaning is the impact of weaning on a child emotionally, and negative behaviors that may arise in a baby during the weaning process.

The cause of these negative behaviors is the change in routine and feelings of loss the child may feel about their breastfeeding relationship.

### Who is most at risk for emotional distress with weaning?

- Those who abruptly wean
- Those who did not meet their original goals for breastfeeding, or feel pressured to wean at a time they would not independently choose.
- Those with a history of depression.

Why are the hormonal shifts during weaning associated with depressive symptoms?

- Weaning causes a dramatic drop in prolactin and oxytocin, both of which are associated with feelings of well being, calmness, and relaxation.
- Dropping levels of prolactin and oxytocin during rapid weaning are more likely to contribute to emotional distress than a slower weaning process that allows for gradual hormonal shifts.

It is important to understand that these feelings are completely normal, and while weaning changes your physical relationship with your baby, you will find a new normal together. Your hormones will settle out, you will establish a new routine, and things will be alright.

### Scan to Schedule a Weaning Consultation



In order to help alleviate these negative feelings about weaning, be sure to substitute other means of physical contact and comfort.

Ideas Include:

- baby wearing
- extra snuggling or lap time
- introducing a comfort item such as a soft toy or lovey for the child.

# Weaning

## From the Pump



Melanie Henstrom, IBCLC  
www.babybonds.us

### Genuine Lactation: The Pumping Weaning Schedule



	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
Week 1		PTC			PTC			✓			✓			✓	•		✓			✓			✓	
Week 2					✓	•		✓			✓			✓			✓	•		✓			✓	
Week 3								✓		•		✓				✓				✓		•	✓	
Week 4								PTC				PTC				PTC				PTC			PTC	
Week 5			•					PTC					PTC					PTC					PTC	
Week 6								PTC						PTC		•				PTC				
Week 7								PTC												PTC				
Week 8								PTC	•											PTC				

**PTC = Pumping to Comfort (not to empty) | ✓ = Regular Pumping Session**

**Schedule is based on someone pumping 8 times per day and allowing 6-8 weeks to dry up the milk supply (slower is better to control the hormonal shift).**

Graphic Courtesy of © Genuine Lactation

Each person responds to weaning differently, and the desired timeline is different.

The best way to make sure you wean comfortably is to do a weaning consultation where we can discuss your current pumping/nursing routine, your milk supply, history of issues with clogged ducts, mastitis, and your desired timeline.

Weaning comfortably can be complicated, but getting this support can really help improve your experiences.

**Scan to Schedule  
a Weaning  
Consultation**

