

How to stop breastfeeding ... quickly

It is best to stop breastfeeding slowly, over a few weeks when mother and baby are ready. This is called weaning.

There are times when weaning must be done quickly.

Some reasons why you may have to quickly stop breastfeeding include:

- medical tests
- medications
- surgery
- baby concerns

If you are advised to stop breastfeeding quickly, check with a lactation consultant, your doctor or a public health nurse. It may be possible to continue breastfeeding when taking certain medications or having certain tests. If immediate weaning is your only option, the following suggestions may make you and your baby more comfortable.

What to do when you need to stop breastfeeding

Wear a bra that supports your breasts, but is not too tight. Put cotton breast pads inside the cups of your bra in case your milk leaks. Do not bind or wrap your breasts tightly against your chest. This can be painful and cause problems such as plugged milk ducts or an infection called mastitis.

Do not take medication to "dry up" your milk. This type of medication is not safe for mothers.

Drink when you are thirsty. You do not need to drink less.

If your breasts are tender or painful, a gentle massage can help. Try massaging your breasts during a warm shower.

Wrap an ice pack or bag of frozen vegetables in a kitchen towel and put it on your breasts for up to 20 minutes, several times a day. Some women use refrigerated cabbage leaves on their breasts instead of ice. Change the cabbage leaves often. Do not eat the frozen vegetables or cabbage leaves after using.

Take a mild pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) to reduce pain and swelling.

You may get a fever when you wean quickly. This can last 3 to 4 days. Keep drinking fluids and take acetaminophen to lower the fever.

If your breasts are very full and nothing relieves the pain, you may pump a little milk from your breasts. Pump the least amount of milk that you can to relieve the pain and swelling. Do not empty your breasts with the breast pump, or your body will make more milk.

You may feel disappointed or down, and a little ill. Give yourself time and be patient. It will only take a few days to get back to normal.

Your baby may need help too, as he or she has been used to breastfeeding. Spend lots of time with your baby, cuddling and helping him or her get used to feeding another way. Give your baby time. You may need other support people to help you and baby through this time.



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

Some choices are:

-  your doctor or midwife
-  a lactation consultant
-  a public health nurse