



Feeding, Sleeping, Connecting

Weaning Off The Pump



When moms are ready to wean off pumping, they often wonder if it's the right time and what's the best approach. For many moms, the right time for them may not be the right time for baby. This does not mean a mother cannot wean off the pump, but it does mean that depending on their baby's age, an alternative to pumped human milk must be considered first.

Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and The World Health Organization agree that weaning off human milk or a human milk alternative(formula) is not recommended before 12mos of age. Until 12mos, for every baby, human milk or formula should remain primary regardless of baby beginning to consume solid foods after 6mos.

If weaning off the pump is desired before 12mos of age, mom must be prepared to offer an alternative to human milk in a bottle ,or cup after 6mos, if she has not stored enough pumped milk for the remainder of the first year. Bottle feeding should mimic breast/chest feeding as closely as possible and therefore paced bottle feeding is the preferred method for both pumped human milk and formula along with continuing to feed baby responsively on cue/demand, not a strict schedule.

If considering weaning off the pump after 12mos, baby's diet should be considered as well. If a baby is still not meeting the bulk of his/her nutrient needs by way of solid foods, which is common and normal, then prioritizing and gradually increasing solid food intake before weaning off human milk is recommended. Providing a toddler formula milk in a cup along with meals throughout the day may also be an option to consider if weaning off pumped breastmilk after 12mos.

SO, HOW DO I BEST WEAN OFF THE PUMP?

Slow Is Best

Weaning off pumping is a gradual process that may take up to 1-2mos. It is never recommended to wean "cold turkey" off pumping for two reasons:

(1)

It places mom at greater risk of harmful physiological issues involving her breasts, including clogged ducts and mastitis, that can be very painful and require medical attention.

(2)

If not enough human milk is stored for the remainder of the first 12mos, baby should slowly be transitioned onto formula while mom is weaning off pumping. This can take a while, depending on how baby reacts to dairy or soy formula. The same is true for a toddler who may still need to increase solid food intake, get used to another milk, or wean off the bottle all together. Weaning off pumping slowly can ensure that baby is getting what they need while figuring out an alternative to pumped human milk.

PUMPING THE BREAKS

It is recommended that mom drop one pumping session at a time per week. This same pumping session should be gradually decreased over the span of 3-7 days. Meaning that if the pumping session usually goes on for 20min, mom could reduce down to 15min that first day and continue to decrease the time by 5min every other day over the span of the week. It is not recommended that mom drop more than one pumping session per week. This gradual weaning off the pump makes it easier for mom's supply to regulate down to the new demand without experiencing much fullness or discomfort.

Once mom has weaned off of one pumping session without feeling discomfort or fullness then she can move on to the next pumping session at the start of the following week. When choosing which pumping session to drop first, mom can think about which session of the day she likes the least and start there. It may also be helpful, if mom wants to continue storing as much human milk possible while she weans off of pumping, to leave the first morning session or 2-3am session for last. The first morning session and 2-3am session usually yields the most output as prolactin levels are highest at these times.

Mom, Take Care of Your Breasts During this Process

BREASTS FEELING FULL AND UNCOMFORTABLE?

DO NOT PUMP!

You can take a warm shower or soak breasts in a warm tub of water. Hand express just a little to feel comfortable again. Milk production is supply and demand so by removing less milk, your breasts will begin to regulate and produce less. This process usually takes a few days.

WERE YOU TOLD TO BIND YOUR BREASTS?

Breast binding is an outdated practice that can lead to clogged ducts, mastitis, and breast abscesses. Just don't do it!

STILL FEELING DISCOMFORT?

Ibuprofen and other pain relievers can be used to help mom feel more comfortable during the weaning process.

OTHER METHODS THAT CAN DECREASE SUPPLY?

Cabbage leaves in mom's bra
Birth control pills with estrogen
Peppermint and menthol
Decongestants

If mom feels a painful lump in her breast or breast turns red/pink, painful, and hot to the touch, mom should immediately reach out to her CLC/IBCLC and doctor.



Lastly, for every mom reading this, be proud of your feeding journey however long it lasted.

Every time you nursed, pumped, or supplemented for your baby was an act of love.

Every bottle feed or nourishing food you offered and will offer, long after nursing at the breast is over, is a testament to your ever present love and commitment to your child.

You are your baby's best bet, their answer, and YOU ARE ALWAYS ENOUGH!

Best Wishes during this New Phase in your Motherhood Journey!

Gloria