

How do I avoid breast problems when stopping?

Reduce breastfeeding gradually to prevent getting blocked ducts or mastitis. Cutting down gradually is gentler on baby, and mum has time to adjust to hormonal changes too.

In the few situations where you might need to stop breastfeeding abruptly, you may decide to use a pump or hand express. See the UNICEF website www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly and search for 'hand expression video'.

You may choose to drop one feed at a time. Many mums who do this over weeks or months have no problems, but do take care when dropping from one feed a day to none, especially if stopping has been mum-led and not child-led. It may be sensible to express for a few minutes every other day and then every third day.

“I thought it would be fine to drop the last feed, the same way as I stopped the other feeds. However, five days after my toddler had his last feed, I got blocked ducts. After speaking to a breastfeeding counsellor, I had a good soak in the bath and expressed some milk a couple of times. Once the blocked ducts had gone, I expressed every other day for a few more days to prevent it happening again. I gave my toddler the expressed milk on her cereal.”

How can I encourage my child to stop breastfeeding?

To make it easier for your child, avoid stopping at times of change, for example, moving to a new house or if going on holiday. And make sure to give plenty of cuddles.

- One strategy is: don't offer, don't refuse.
- Avoid sitting in the chair or position where you usually feed your baby.
- With an older baby or toddler, avoid clothing that makes access to breastfeeding very easy.
- Think about which breastfeed you and your baby enjoy most and reduce feeds at a different time of day first.
- Distract your baby or toddler with other activities at the times they usually nurse, for example, a toy or a trip to the park.
- You could try gradually shortening the feeds.
- You may find you need to spend some time developing a new bedtime routine. If your older baby or toddler currently feeds to sleep before naps and bedtime, try to leave them a little awake and make new associations with the final process of falling asleep - perhaps a cuddly toy, a song, or a key phrase. Then gradually lengthen the time between the breastfeed and sleeping time until it becomes dropped from the routine entirely.
- Bottle feeding and other milks have a detrimental effect on dental health, so it's recommended that you don't replace a breastfeed with a final bottle before sleep.

Association of Breastfeeding Mothers

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Questions mums ask about stopping breastfeeding



helpline: 0300 100 0212

www.abm.me.uk

Should I stop breastfeeding now?

This leaflet will give you some ideas about how to stop breastfeeding. But first, let's check that this is what you want.

Research shows that many mums wish they'd breastfed for longer. Symptoms of colic and reflux may be worse in formula-fed babies and there may be other risks to your baby's health if you stop breastfeeding earlier than you intended. If you're told you must stop breastfeeding don't panic. You can talk to a breastfeeding counsellor (BFC) about your concerns and chat through all the options available to you. If you're finding breastfeeding painful, she can help you explore whether this could be improved with better positioning and attachment. Maybe sleep issues, routines or pressure from other people are causing problems for you. A BFC will listen to you and offer support to help you work out what your options are. Breastfeeding counsellors are here to help you stop breastfeeding whenever you want to. We will support you with your decision.

The National Breastfeeding Helpline is open from 9.30am – 9.30pm every day on 0300 100 0212.

What do I replace breastfeeding with?

You can transition to a cup rather than a bottle in a baby over 5-6 months. Dentists recommend that babies should not have bottles after they are 12 months old. Babies under 12 months should not be given ordinary cow's milk as a drink. They will need either expressed breast milk or infant formula (if weaned from the breast) or a combination of both. Babies over six months can have breast milk or infant formula or a combination, alongside solid food. Babies and toddlers over 12 months can be given full fat cow's milk.

What other options might I have?

Breastfeeding isn't an 'all or nothing' thing.

- Continue to breastfeed and combine this with your own expressed breast milk.
- Partially breastfeed your baby and combine with formula.
- Gradually end breastfeeding, leaving the opportunity open to increase breastfeeds in the future.

Does taking medication mean I have to stop breastfeeding?

You may be told that you need to stop breastfeeding so you can take medication or have a medical procedure. However, there are few medications which are not compatible with breastfeeding or for which there is no alternative. Do check first and tell your doctor that you're breastfeeding. See www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk for the 'Drugs in Breastmilk – is it safe?' factsheet. If you have specific questions about medications or treatments, please message the **Drugs in Breastmilk information service** Facebook page or email druginformation@breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk.

“The chemist said I should stop to take a particular medication but then I found out it wasn't necessary, so I started breastfeeding again. But I wish I'd had more information in the first place.”

Should I stop breastfeeding before we go on holiday?

Breastfeeding is very flexible when travelling and will protect your baby or toddler from infections and ear problems when on a plane.

I'm going back to work in a couple of months

Returning to work doesn't mean that you need to end breastfeeding. You have some rights under UK law. You could express milk while at work and/or continue to breastfeed when with your baby. Some mums choose to stop partially or fully when they go back to work (see the ABM leaflet on returning to work for more information).

Different ways of ending breastfeeding

Baby-led: Baby leads the pace and ending breastfeeding is usually *gradual*. If your baby or toddler becomes unwell, they may need to feed more frequently for a while until they recover.

Mum-led: Mum decides when she is ready to stop.

Partly baby-led, partly mum-led: This sometimes happens when mum returns to work, especially if mum chooses not to express at work. If you continue to breastfeed when you're at home, you may still be able to stop gradually.

How can I get support with ending breastfeeding and further information?

You could talk through options for your specific situation with a breastfeeding counsellor, either at a support group or via the helpline. Your health visitor may also be able to support you with the introduction of bottles and ending breastfeeding. Visit the ABM's website to find out the different ways we can support you and how you can find us on social media.

Also available from ABM:

- Breastfeeding beyond infancy
- Breastfeeding and returning to work
- Expressing breastmilk