

Milk Supply/Six Months to One Year

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By the time the baby is six months old, breastfeeding has become so easy that mothers have a difficult time remembering the beginning of the learning process. From this point to one year, developmental stages of the baby may be the only thing that causes mothers to question their supply. However, by this time, unless there has been a lifestyle change such as the mother taking a new medication, the milk supply is secure.

Six to Eight months

The biggest developmental stage at this time is the introduction of solid foods; juices fall into this category. Exactly how to do this and what foods to start always generates a lot of conflicting advice and information. Just like child rearing, there are no absolute "rights". Much depends on your family health history, and even your baby's personality. As for how to combine solid food feedings with breastfeeding, that is easy. Solids are not intended to replace breastmilk at this point, but rather to serve as both a learning process and a dietary compliment. The initial weeks of solid feedings are usually anything from a few bites, to one or two tablespoons. Nurse the baby first, then follow up with solids. If you find that your baby refuses all solids, wait a few days, then try again. If this continues, you can wait to try solids an hour after breastfeeding when the baby's tummy isn't quite so full. Initially, the baby will only have one solid food feeding a day, but will gradually work up to 2-3 feedings per day by the time they are about 8-9 months old. Again, the bulk of the baby's nutrition is from breastmilk, so there is no rush to start three meals a day immediately. It will come, and faster than you think.

Eight to Ten months

At this age, your baby will take another huge developmental jump-almost literally! They will be crawling (backwards or forwards), and pulling up. They may even be attempting to stand without support. A lot of this activity leads to what is commonly referred to as a nursing strike. This is when the baby appears uninterested in breastfeeding. Many mothers take this as a sign that they want to wean. Nothing could be further from the truth-they often seem to need the reconnection with their mothers at the end of the day, to wind down for bed especially. But while they are exploring and gaining independence, eating becomes less of a priority. You will see this again when they are toddlers, striking out for more independence; the food wars will begin with a vengeance!

Once they get a handle on all of these new learning stages, feedings will settle down again. At this age, babies typically nurse about five to six times a day, although this will vary.

Eleven To Twelve months

At this stage many mothers struggle with whether or not to wean; this is a very personal decision. The many benefits of breastmilk continue throughout the breastfeeding process, regardless of infant age. Feedings at one year and beyond usually drop to 2-4 per day, and typically occur at bedtime and in the morning.

If you decide to wean, making it a gradual process will be easier on you and the baby. Abrupt weaning can lead to blocked ducts or even mastitis so this should be avoided whenever possible. To wean, start by dropping one feeding at a time, reducing after 2-3 days. Avoid expressing your milk at all-especially "just to check" unless you want to continue producing. To help dry up faster, you can use cabbage leaves. Simply peel off the outer layers of a head of cabbage and discard. Rinse inner leaves and pat dry. Bruise the leaves with a rolling pin or meat tenderizer, then tuck into your bra next to your skin, replacing when wilted. This method can work pretty fast so be sure of your decision before starting.

If you have been using a pump, you will need to store it somewhere that doesn't expose it to extreme temperatures. Many of the manufacturers use flexible plastics on the motors and extreme temperatures cause them to wear very quickly. In addition, wipe it down thoroughly with

disinfectant before storing to prevent mold and mildew. This is not a fun thing to find when you are pregnant with the next baby. Many of the silicone parts such as tubing and valves will need to be replaced; they break down in any type of storage so you should just discard them. Your rigid plastic parts such as the breast flanges and collection bottles should be sterilized and stored with the pump.

Above all, do NOT loan anyone your pump. In addition to putting wear on the motor so that it won't work effectively for you in the future, personal use pumps are just that-personal. You can't sterilize the motor itself and this could put you and your baby at risk. Loan out those maternity clothes instead, you have a toddler now and are way past that stage!

For questions or concerns about breastfeeding, or for pumps and feeding equipment, call All The Best at 749-2327 or visit www.feedyourbaby.com.