

Breastfeeding a Toddler.... Whatever For?

Most people know that “breast is best”. Many people are comfortable with seeing a baby breastfeeding. But few people are comfortable seeing a toddler nursing. Cultures around the world have very different beliefs about when a child should be weaned, ranging from very early in North America to very late in some other countries.

The minimum predicted age for natural weaning in humans is 2.5 years, with a maximum of 7.0 years. (A Natural Age of Weaning, Katherine Dettwyler, 1999). In societies where children are allowed to nurse “as long as they want” they usually self-wean with no arguments or emotional trauma, sometime between the ages of 2 and 4.

The World Health Organization, UNICEF and Health Canada recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months with continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond. The benefits of breastfeeding do not stop when a baby reaches six months or one year of age. Breastmilk

continues to provide many important benefits as your baby gets older.

Benefits to Toddler Nursing

- ♥ nutrition
- ♥ comfort & security
- ♥ special time together
- ♥ immunities and vitamins
- ♥ protection from illness & allergies

The immunities in breast milk actually increase in concentration as the toddler gets older and nurses less. When toddlers are sick many would rather breastfeed than eat other food.

Breastfeeding your toddler allows you to spend some special time together during their busy, waking hours. It helps your child feel secure as she explores her huge and exciting world. Breastfeeding your toddler is a gift of love that lasts a lifetime.



Breastfeeding during Pregnancy & Tandem Nursing

If you have had healthy pregnancies before and are healthy now, it is safe for you to continue to breastfeed during your pregnancy and after the birth of a new baby. If you have any concerns, talk to your health care provider.

Weaning

Sometimes mothers are ready to wean before their baby is ready. It is normal to have conflicting feelings about this especially if your baby is less than 2 years old. It may help to talk to a La Leche League leader, another breastfeeding mother or a Public Health Nurse. Keep weaning gradual and positive. Natural weaning encourages a child’s natural development to independence.

Planned Weaning

- ♥ stop nursing at one or two feeding times
- ♥ shorten feeding times
- ♥ offer other drink or food
- ♥ use distractions
- ♥ play & give extra attention
- ♥ change routine
- ♥ don't offer, don't refuse
- ♥ express a little milk if you get engorged
- ♥ "dry up" pills are no longer used
- ♥ your breasts will continue to have a little milk for several months after weaning



If you have questions about breastfeeding contact these community resources

Thunder Bay District Health Unit 625-5972
Breastfeeding Connection – in the District only
La Leche League 346-8477
Breastfeeding Clinic 625-5916
Maternity Centre Support Services 684-6228
24 hour referral line 211
Toll free 1-877-586-5638

visit www.tbdhu.com



Health Canada recommends breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond.



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit

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**A GUIDE
FOR
MOTHERS**