



Night Weaning

Your decision whether to night wean is always a personal choice, so there's no right or wrong answer here - you need to do what feels right. By 4-6 months, feel free to keep up to 2 night feeds if you want, but your baby shouldn't need to eat more than that if her daytime nutrition is optimal.

By 6 months, many babies still need one night feed, but others are ready to be completely night-weaned. And once solids are established and your baby is eating three solid meals, he can usually be completely weaned from night feeds as long as he's healthy and continuing to gain weight.

If your baby is eating significantly more than that at nighttime, it's usually indicative of a food-sleep association, where your baby relies on eating to fall asleep. If this is the case, you'll need to explore some sleep training and teach your baby how to fall asleep without eating to begin with, in addition to implementing a night-weaning strategy.

How do you go about weaning your baby from one or multiple night feeds? There's a few strategies you can use:

1. Reduce the amount of milk offered in each feed.

If you're breastfeeding, you can reduce the length of each feed by 1 minute at a time, and if you're bottle feeding, you can reduce the bottle size by one ounce at a time. The goal here is to gradually shift the calories from the nighttime to the daytime. If you choose this option, I usually recommend

completing the process within a week. However, if you're in no rush, you can always take longer. It's up to you! This is a great option for babies or toddlers who are only waking once or twice a night to eat.

2. Gradually increase the duration of time between feeds every night.

This is if you have a baby who's eating very frequently at nighttime. For example, if your baby or toddler is eating every 2 hours, start off by only offering your baby a feed every 2.5 hours. If he wakes up before it's time to eat, you should get him back to sleep using any means other than feeding. And if you are night weaning and sleep training at the same time, then you would continue with your sleep training approach to get the baby back to sleep.

REAL LIFE EXAMPLES

Age: 6 month old

Night Schedule: nurses/takes a bottle to sleep and fall back asleep every two hours. Eats very little at each feed.

Weaning Solution: increasing the amount of time between feeds each night. Issue is not so much calories but that baby is using the bottle/mom as a pacifier

How this Looks: Begin by feeding baby every 3 hours instead of every 2 hrs. Every night, you'd add 30 minutes to the previous night's feeding intervals.

Sleep Training: Again, whichever technique you choose, but we'll use Sleep Lady Shuffle.

So if this baby goes to bed for 7pm, falls asleep at 7:30pm and wakes at 9:30pm, it wouldn't be time to feed the baby because it

hadn't been 3 hours since the last feed. This means that mom would go back to the chair and sit there until he falls back asleep. Now let's say that this baby falls back asleep by 10pm and wakes up again at midnight. At that point, it's been more than 3 hours so you can feed the baby. Afterwards, place the baby back in the crib completely awake and continue with the Shuffle to get the baby to fall back asleep. And if she wakes up again at 3:30am, you can feed her because it's been more than 3 hours since the previous feed. Now, if this baby wakes up again at 4:30am, you wouldn't be feeding this baby then because it was much less than 3 hours since the previous feed. Instead, you'd go straight back to the chair and stay there until she falls back asleep.

The last option is to eliminate the feeds one (or two) at a time. This is appropriate for babies who only have a few feeds, if that much, to give up- in other words, NOT for the babies eating every 2 hours. If you are breastfeeding and hoping to continue breastfeeding, I wouldn't recommend eliminating more than one feed at a time because you don't want your milk supply to be affected.

Now, here are some important tips to remember when going through the night weaning process:

1. Work on putting the baby down awake at bedtime. If your baby doesn't know how to fall asleep on her own at bedtime, night weaning can be challenging, if not impossible, because she might continue to wake up needing to eat to fall BACK asleep. I specifically recommend that you don't feed your baby RIGHT before bedtime. This is because the feed can often make him a bit drowsy before bedtime, which means he's technically not self-soothing. But even if he's wide awake after his feed, there is still, by sheer definition, a weak food-sleep association if he gets used to eating RIGHT

before he goes to bed. The risk here is that he'll wake up and feel as though he needs to eat in order to then roll over and go back to sleep, just like what happens at bedtime. So always make sure that the baby is being fed 15-20 minutes before bedtime.

2. By the same token, really try to work on putting your baby back awake after feeding. This way, your baby isn't confused as to why he gets to nurse back to sleep sometimes but not others.
3. Don't replace milk with water as a long term weaning strategy. I've seen babies develop a food-sleep association with bottles of water, so you could find yourself jumping from the fire into the frying pan.
4. If your baby is falling asleep on his own and sleeping straight through until 4-5am, he's probably ready to be fully weaned. In fact, nursing your baby at 5am and putting him back to sleep can actually throw off other aspects of his sleep! This is because he's likely waking up because he needs to learn to put himself back to sleep on his own and instead, he's missing out on that opportunity because he's being nursed instead. I've seen this feed stay in for too long and it can actually throw off daytime nap as well. My advice? Either get rid of the feed completely- but if you're not ready for that, offer the baby a dream feed around 11 instead. This way, when baby wakes up at 4am, he can learn to fall back asleep on his own.