

# NUTRITION ON YOUR OWN



SELF-PACED LESSON

## Breastfeeding Beyond the First Few Months

**How old is your baby?**

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**How long has your baby breastfed?**

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Give yourself a pat on the back! You have given your baby the healthiest start in life by breastfeeding.

Did you know breastfeeding longer than six months can help improve the long-term health and well-being of both you and your baby? It's true! For your baby, your breasts are a special place of love, comfort, protection, and security.

**First, think of a place you like to visit often or think of a special activity you love to do. Write your answer below:**

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The feeling of enjoyment you get from visiting your special place or doing your special activity is the same feeling your baby gets from breastfeeding. Plus, your baby gets added immunity from your breastmilk. WIC and other health organizations recommend breastfeeding for at least the first year of your baby's life.

**Next, put a check mark on the following pages by the topics that describe your questions or concerns about breastfeeding your baby beyond the first few months. Then talk to a WIC breastfeeding counselor about your choices.**

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**☐ Are you returning to work or school?**

Did you know you can pump and store your breastmilk? WIC has breast pumps available, free of charge. Perhaps you can continue to give breastmilk to your baby by breastfeeding when you are with your baby and pumping when you are away. WIC counselors are available to help teach you how to use the pump, store your milk, and talk to your employer about pumping at work.

**☐ Is your baby teething?**

Teething can be painful for your baby. Breastfeeding helps comfort and soothe your baby during this time. Don't worry — babies cannot actively nurse and bite at the same time. Your WIC breastfeeding counselor can give you tips on how to avoid being bitten.

**☐ Does it seem like your baby is nursing at the breast all the time?**

A sudden increase in the amount of time your baby wants to breastfeed could mean he is going through a growth spurt. During growth spurts, your baby may nurse more often. Allowing your baby to nurse more often increases your milk supply to meet the needs of your baby. Be patient — most babies return to their regular nursing schedules within a couple of days. If your baby is six months old, you can begin introducing solid foods.

**☐ Does it seem like your baby does not want to nurse?**

Some babies go through “nursing strikes” or suddenly refuse to breastfeed. Nursing strikes before your baby is one year old do not mean he is ready to stop breastfeeding. Most times, there is something else going on — like teething or an illness. Your WIC breastfeeding counselor can give you more information on how to get your baby nursing again.



**Are friends or family supportive of your choice to continue breastfeeding your baby?**

Remind your loved ones that breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for both you and your baby. It is the best thing you can give your baby. All the benefits of breastmilk continue for as long as your baby is breastfed. In fact, some of the benefits of breastfeeding are greater if you breastfeed longer.

**Do you have a medical reason that requires weaning your baby?**

Did you know you can continue nursing after your surgery or when you finish taking your medications? Ask a WIC breastfeeding counselor for more information to share with your doctor about breastfeeding and medication or surgery.

**Do you have questions about weaning?**

Weaning is a change for both you and your baby, so take your time. You and your baby will adjust better if weaning is done slowly. Talk to a WIC breastfeeding counselor; she can give you tips on how to safely reduce your milk supply. Most importantly, give your baby lots of extra cuddles, kisses, and love during this time of change.

**What other breastfeeding questions do you have?**

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1. Name two things you learned about breastfeeding today.

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2. How does WIC support your decision to continue breastfeeding?

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3. Who can you call if you have questions or concerns about breastfeeding?

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