



TIP SHEET: Weaning and Mental Health



Ways to Ease the Impact on Mental Health During the Weaning Process

- Avoid weaning cold turkey- Start slow and gradually drop feeds - start by eliminating a feed that would be least dysregulating for you and your child.
- Due to a drop in oxytocin, “the love hormone” when weaning, feelings of sadness, anxiety, irritability and mood swings may occur for a short period. If these feelings last longer than a few weeks and impact your quality of life, seek outside treatment/support.
- Create a plan - but be flexible, and listen to your instincts.
- Identify and reach out to your supports; breastfeeding/chestfeeding peers, partners and others that can offer a safe, listening ear, and space to process your feelings.
- Connect to activities and things that bring you joy and make you feel good.
- Identify alternative ways you connect and soothe your baby (snuggling, singing, walking, babywearing, playing, dancing, etc.).



Coping Techniques to Protect Mental Health During the Weaning Process

- Regular exercise
- Breathing and meditation
- Be mindful of what you eat and drink (good fats and proteins, limit caffeine)
- Have fun!
- Hugging, kissing, cuddling, intimacy
- Dancing, singing
- Spend time outside and in the sun

Questions to Ask Yourself in the Weaning Preparation Stage

- Who are your supports to contact when you feel the impact of weaning?
- Create a safety plan for yourself- how will you care for yourself and your child when big feelings arise in the process?
- How will you communicate the new limits with your child? What is your capacity at the time of weaning to set firm, kind, and non-negotiable limits?
- When you wean, oxytocin levels drop, meaning a possible drop in mood. What are alternative ways that can you can boost your oxytocin naturally?

Resources

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention-Weaning

Weaning strategies and support for breastfeeding/chestfeeding parents
cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/weaning.html

2. La Leche League of New Mexico (LLLNM)

LLLNM offers breastfeeding support to all who want to breastfeed, and helps parents reach their breastfeeding goals
llnm.org

3. New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force (NMBTF)

NMBTF offers resources, links to events around NM, support groups, and education
breastfeedingnm.org

4. New Mexico Crisis Line

New Mexico's 988 is the confidential lifeline for emotional, mental or alcohol and drug misuse support

nmcrisisline.com

Call 988Text "TALK" to 988

5. Postpartum Support International (PSI)

PSI has published stories and coping tips from parents who have weaned. PSI offers free and virtual support groups to connect with other parents and gain resources and tools

postpartum.net

6. New Mexico Women, Infants and Children (NMWIC)

NMWIC offers classes, education, lactation peer-counseling, pumping support and advocacy

nmwic.org

"As breastfeeding comes to end it can be an emotional time and mothers can experience a wide range of feelings. For some it might be a time of sadness - a sense of loss for the time that's gone before and a sorrow that your special 'baby days' are passing and behind you. For others it might be a huge relief and a time you had longed for and thought would never come."

-La Leche

