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### Breastfeeding After One Year of Age

Nursing a toddler or preschooler can be very rewarding. Cherub gets clean, super-nutritious milk. Mothers can decrease their risk of breast cancer by 4.5 percent for every year they nurse.

But it's not the same as nursing a baby under a year of age. A toddler needs to learn ways to deal with frustration, postponement, boredom, and minor discomfort — skills that are as important as talking and walking. Frequent or on-demand nursing interferes with learning these skills.

So as you head into the second year of nursing, decide on a schedule — nursing only at meals and at bedtime, for instance. In between times, say "It's not time yet." Don't argue, apologize, reason, explain, or ask Cherub's permission by saying "OK?" Don't "hear" whining. Just go on to the next activity.

You'll be glad you did.

Here are some more hints:

#### PROTECT YOUR OWN AND YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL HEALTH:

**Toddlers have teeth:** Biting Mommy is not the issue here; cavities are. Frequent nursing, and especially night nursing, can keep a toddler's teeth coated with milk, and this can produce a mouthful of cavities at a young age.

**Toddlers can demand too much milk for their own good:** Mother's milk has about 20 calories per ounce. Too much, even of such a good thing, can contribute to obesity. Sixteen to 24 ounces a day is the right amount.

**Toddlers need a variety of foods.** Mother's milk is not a complete nutritional source for toddlers. They need iron, Vitamin D, and fiber — and experience with a variety of tastes and textures.

**Protect your own bones.** Make sure you are taking at least 1000 mg of calcium and 400 mg of Vitamin D daily. You can be sure you are getting weight-bearing exercise!

**Watch what you put in your mother's milk:** Nicotine, alcohol, drugs of all kinds (including hormones) and some viruses can cross into the breast milk. So can toxins such as lead, pesticides, and mercury. So be careful! And don't let your child nurse from anyone but you.

#### PROTECT YOUR WHOLE FAMILY'S EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

**Bear in mind that Cherub is no longer a baby.** When you're nursing, it's easy to forget that this is a person with a mind, vocabulary, and agenda of his or her own. Make the most of the non-nursing times to play and talk with Cherub, so that you can really see how rapidly development is going on.

**Protect your adult love relationship:** A toddler's imperious demands for access to maternal breasts can seem much more like erotic competition than a young baby's nursing cries.

**Protect your parenting skills:** When a parent and child are very strongly and intimately bonded, it can be painful to set limits — it feels like a disruption of that bond. If you find this happening, discuss it with your pediatrician, your mate, or someone else you trust.