



WEANING PUPPIES: WHAT TO DO

MOM NEEDS SOME ALONE TIME KIDS



Weaning is the gradual reduction of a puppy's dependency on his mother's milk and care.



WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO WEAN A LITTER OF PUPPIES?



Weaning a nursing puppy should **begin around 4 - 5 weeks old** and is ideally **completed by about 7 - 8 weeks old**. Although it's often unavoidable, especially in the case of orphaned dogs, it's **preferable to allow weaning to be a gradual process** that occurs over several weeks. **Puppies need time to learn important behaviors from their mother and littermates**, including how to interpret signs of dominance, inhibit their own biting habits and submit to more dominant dogs. It's also preferable for the mother to slowly dry up her milk supply. **Weaning can be a stressful time for puppies and mom** and, whenever possible, should be a gradual and **supervised** process.

HOW DO I WEAN A LITTER OF PUPPIES?



Start by separating the mother from her litter for a few hours at a time. While separated, introduce the puppies to eating from a pan (a muffin pan works great, each pup can line up around and have their own "bowl"). This time apart will reduce the pups' dependency on their mother's milk and overall presence. The amount of food and the frequency and length of separation can gradually be increased. As the puppies become independent and self-confident, they can spend more and more time away from their mother until they are completely weaned.



WHAT DO I NEED TO FEED PUPPIES DURING THE WEANING PROCESS?



- ❑ During the weaning process, it's a good idea to feed puppies the same high-quality puppy food they'll eat throughout their growth period right from the start. Be sure to moisten the food with warm water or canine milk replacer to create a soft, soupy mush that's appealing to their sensitive palates.
- ❑ For the first few feedings, pups may need encouragement to eat. For example, puppies may be allowed to lick mush from a finger dipped into the pan. Most puppies will quickly learn to feed from the bowl. Always have fresh water available; be careful that the water bowl isn't too big and too deep – you don't want a clumsy puppy drowning.

HOW SHOULD I CARE FOR MOMMY DURING THE WEANING PROCESS?



To prevent mom from overproducing milk, which can lead to painful, engorged mammary glands, it is important to observe a feeding and separation schedule both for her and the puppies. Give mom plenty of breaks, outside time away from her pups, fresh air, socializing with other dogs in the house, a walk around the neighborhood, tv time with some special treats – spoil her and make her time away from pups special and fun.



WHAT IF THE PUPPIES ARE ORPHANS?



- ❑ If your fostering orphaned pups, you can start the weaning process as early as 3-4 weeks old. In conjunction with bottle-feeding, provide the wee ones with canine milk replacer in a shallow bowl (if they hesitate to drink, dip your finger in the milk replacer and let them lick it, never force their noses into the bowl.)
- ❑ The puppies should soon be off the bottle and introduced to moistened, high quality puppy food. If they enjoy their new mush, you can complete the weaning process with regular dry or canned food as described above.

PLEASE
NOTE...

TIPS TO MAKE THE WEANING PROCESS GO SMOOTHER

- ☑ Take your time. It can be frustrating if **puppies don't immediately take to the transition** but **be patient**. Periodic setbacks are normal.
- ☑ Keep the **babies dry and warm**. Weaning is a messy process, and puppies will often find themselves covered in milk or food. **Wipe off any "leftovers"** and move the puppies **away from drafts**.
- ☑ Remember, size does matter. **It's okay to leave dry food out for small- or medium-sized dogs** to peck as they wish, but it's **important to control portions for larger dogs**, who can suffer from bone or joint problems if they eat too much during this period of growth.
- ☑ **Stay in touch with your FC**, share updates, photos, any changes in behaviors, concerns, weight loss, lethargy – **puppies are fragile and should be monitored closely**.

EASY PUPPY MUSH RECIPE



Put dry puppy kibble their bowls. They'll likely end up wearing more than they eat, so you only need enough so they can all get a taste. It's best to use the same dry food their mother has been eating, which should be a high-quality puppy food while she's nursing.

Add water to the kibble and let it soak. You can use formula, but not necessary since mom will still be nursing/weaning.

Stir and mash the softened food until it's like the consistency of porridge. Add a little more water or formula if needed. As the puppies grow and learn to eat better, you can gradually thicken the mush, but keep it thin at first. You can add canned dog or puppy food at this point, but for the first meals keep the amount very small or the mush will be too thick.

You can keep puppy mush down round the clock, let them find it, taste it, learn to love it. Just be sure to give mom time away from pups so when they're hungry they'll start looking for mush. Don't do anything cold turkey. Slow and steady.

