

Lactation after Loss Information Leaflet

We are very sorry that your baby has sadly died. One of the most distressing physical symptoms following the death of your baby can be breast pain and the production of breast milk. This leaflet aims to provide you with information on how to stop your breast milk production, with some practical advice to help ease the physical symptoms of breast engorgement that you may experience during this difficult and emotional time.

Natural Milk Production

The amount of milk produced in the breast will vary from person to person, and will reduce naturally over a period of time. If breastfeeding has already been established, your breasts may continue to produce milk for some time.

It is extremely important not to abruptly stop the production of milk if breastfeeding has already been established, as this may increase the risk of severe breast engorgement and mastitis.

Engorgement

Engorgement is when the breasts become swollen, firm and painful. It can happen between 2-5 days after the death of your baby. Your breasts can leak milk and feel uncomfortable for up to 7-14 days. This can settle on its own. If severely engorged, your breasts can become hard, shiny, warm and slightly lumpy to touch. Breast engorgement actually helps to suppress the production of breast milk. However, painful breast engorgement is not necessary and can be avoided.

Mastitis

Mastitis is inflammation of the breast, which, if left untreated, can develop into a more serious infection. Symptoms include:

- red, swollen area on the breast that is hot and painful to touch
- breast lump or area of hardness on the breast
- white or blood stained nipple discharge
- flu-like symptoms including fatigue, chills, fever

If you display any of these symptoms it is recommended that you contact your midwife, health visitor or GP as antibiotic treatment may be required.

Relieving Symptoms of Engorgement

There are a variety of methods that can be used to reduce milk production including prescribed medication and a milk reduction routine. These are a few suggestions to help relieve engorgement

- Take regular pain relief
- Wear a support bra all the time
- Use breast pads to absorb leaking milk
- Use cold compresses or gel packs on the breasts
- If your breasts feel very full, hand express a small amount off for comfort
- Apply washed and chilled cabbage leaves to the breasts
- Have a warm bath or shower to allow the breasts to leak naturally (ensure shower water jets are not directly on the breasts)

- Sleep in a semi upright position to avoid pressure from heavy breasts

If You Need To Hand Express

To hand express, hold your breast with your fingers a few inches back from the areola (the dark part around the nipple). Push your hand back toward the chest wall, and then roll your fingers forward toward the nipple, taking care not to slide your fingers over the skin

Reducing Your Milk Supply

If you were expressing regularly for a premature or ill baby you will need to gradually reduce the amount of breast milk produced. This can be done through increasing the time between hand or pump expressing, over a few days and eventually coming to a stop. We would suggest the following

Day 1 Pump each breast for 5 minutes every 4-5 hours

Day 2 Pump each breast for 3-5 minutes every 6 hours

Day 3 Pump each breast just long enough to relieve discomfort

Medication

Cabergoline (Dostinex) prevents / suppresses milk production by blocking the hormone that is secreted to produce milk. It should be used alongside a milk reduction routine. The dose of Cabergoline is 0.25 mg twice a day for two days. Your midwife or GP will be able to arrange this.

Milk Donation

Not every woman wants to stop lactating at this difficult time, and there is the option of donating your milk to the UK National Milk Bank for it to be used to treat premature and sick babies.

Tel: 020 838 33559 www.ukamb.org

The Funeral

Around the time of your baby's funeral is going to be highly emotional. This unfortunately can affect your milk production and you may experience engorgement even though you thought things were settling down. If possible, sit down and support your breasts with your arm. Let people know not to hug you too hard if your breasts are painful.

Local Support

It is important that you are supported through your bereavement. The hospital has a dedicated bereavement team called The Honeysuckle Team. Please contact the team on 0151 702 4151 / email honeysuckle@lwh.nhs.uk or search Honeysuckle Team on Facebook.

National Support

Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity

www.uk-sands.org

Helpline: 02074365881

Child Bereavement UK

<http://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

Tel: 0800 0288840

Winston's Wish

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Helpline: 0845 030405

General enquiries: 01242 51
5157

Childhood Bereavement Network

www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk

Tel: 020 7843 568900

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Your local PALS team is available to help with any of your comments, compliments or concerns and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

Please ask your midwife or the neonatal nurse that was caring for your baby for details

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk