

Lactation after Loss



Breastfeeding Committee
for Saskatchewan
www.theBCS.ca



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Your physician/midwife/nurse practitioner

Insert contact information here

Public Health Nursing/Maternal Visiting Program

Insert contact information here

Lactation Consultant

Insert contact information here

Saskatchewan Lactation Consultant Association www.skslca.com

Donating your milk

Some mothers wish to donate their milk to babies in need. It may be possible for you to collect your breastmilk and donate it to a milk bank. For more information, please contact your lactation consultant or health care provider.



Why is this Happening?

The experience of losing a baby through miscarriage or stillbirth is not something a woman or her family plans for. Many women are unprepared for the physical and emotional changes they experience. Breastmilk production can be one of those unexpected changes.

We hope that this brochure will help you to understand why your body is making breastmilk and what you can do to manage it.

Breastmilk production after loss

Throughout your pregnancy, your breasts were changing in preparation to feed your baby. When your baby died, your body did not know that the milk is not needed. Hormones will signal your body to begin milk production. For the first few days, you will notice a thick, yellowish substance called colostrum which may leak from your nipples. On the second or third day, your breastmilk may begin to come in. Women experience a feeling of heaviness or pressure in the breasts and may experience a “let down” or leaking of milk.

The arrival of breastmilk can be an upsetting time. Some women want to stop milk production as soon as possible. Other mothers may be reassured that their body was able to produce milk.

There is no right or wrong way to feel. Be gentle with yourself and follow whatever path seems right for you.

If you want to stop making milk

If your breasts feel painful from the pressure of the milk and you are wanting to stop milk production, there are a number of things you can try:

- Take a shower or bath. The warm water may allow the milk to leak freely to relieve some pressure.
- Express just enough milk by hand to make yourself comfortable.
To hand express, hold your breast with your fingers a few centimeters back from the base of the nipple. Press into the breast and roll your fingers forward toward the nipple to release a few drops of milk
- Wear a comfortable bra with good support. Breast pads or a small, folded cloth can be used inside the bra to absorb any leaking milk
- Put ice packs (crushed ice or frozen peas wrapped in a cloth) or a cold, wet cloth on your breasts for 10 to 20 minutes several times during the day
- Placing washed, raw and cold cabbage leaves inside the bra can also help to reduce milk production.

Medication to “dry up” your milk is no longer recommended due to the side effects women can experience.

If you have an established milk supply

Some mothers have been pumping for or have been nursing a baby before he/she died. If this is the case for you, it is important to decrease your milk supply gradually to prevent engorgement, plugged ducts and mastitis.

To decrease your milk supply gradually:

- Only pump/hand express a small amount of milk until your breasts feel comfortable
- Slowly decrease the number of times you pump in 24 hours
- Decrease 1 pumping session every few days depending on how fast your supply adjusts
- Apply cold packs (crushed ice or frozen peas in a bag and wrapped in a towel) to your breasts for 10 minutes at a time, several times a day to help reduce swelling
- Cabbage leaves can also be applied to the breasts to help with engorgement

If you have been loaned a breast pump from the hospital or Public Health, return it as soon as you no longer need it.