

Suppressing lactation

Information to support
you with stopping
breast milk production

This leaflet gives information about how to stop producing breast milk. If you would like more support with this decision, please speak to a member of your healthcare team.

If you have already been expressing and storing your milk, there is also information about what you might like to do with it.

Reducing your milk supply

If you have been expressing regularly, milk production can be stopped by gradually reducing the number of times you express each day. The aim is to release enough milk to keep you comfortable without stimulating your breasts to produce more milk.

Stopping expressing too quickly can lead to complications such as blocked ducts, mastitis and abscesses. If you have an infection, you might need antibiotics. If you are an inpatient and need support with these complications, you can ask your healthcare team for more information. If you are in the community, please ask for support from your GP. More information about mastitis can be found on [NHS.uk](https://www.nhs.uk).

If you are still in hospital you might be able to have a medicine called cabergoline. This medicine can have unpleasant side effects and is more likely to help soon after birth, rather than at a later stage. Please consider this when deciding if this medicine is right for you. Speak to your care team, pharmacist, or maternity or neonatal breastfeeding teams if you would like more information.

Steps to reduce lactation

- Gradually go longer between expressions. For example, if you have been expressing 8 times a day, start by reducing to 6 or 7 times, and reduce every few days or to comfort.
or
- Gradually express for less time in total. To start with, try to express for about half the time you usually would at each expression.

Tips to help you

Milk production is different for everyone and you might need to make adjustments to minimise your discomfort.

- Use cooled cloths on your breasts to provide pain relief and decrease swelling.
- Take warm showers and allow your milk to leak. This allows emptying of the breast without further stimulation
- Avoid touching your breasts, particularly the nipple area as this can stimulate milk production.
- Wear a well-fitting, supportive bra with no wire (wire can constrict the ducts, especially under your arms).
- You can use regular painkillers that you can buy from a pharmacy or shop, if necessary and appropriate. Follow the instructions on the packet.
- Use breast pads to soak up any leaking milk and change them regularly if wet.
- Handling your breasts might be uncomfortable. Be gentle, use a support pillow or cushion when lying down to support your breasts.

When will lactation stop?

Everyone will have a different experience, it could take days or weeks. This can depend on:

- the stage of your pregnancy
- the age of baby
- whether you have started expressing
- how much milk you are currently producing
- how often you are currently expressing

Please ask for support from the healthcare team, infant feeding team or community team available to you.

Frozen breast milk

If you have breast milk stored in hospital, you can choose to keep it. Milk in hospital can only be kept for up to 6 weeks so you will need to take home any milk that you want to keep.

Tell us if you would like us to donate it to the Human Milk Bank at our hospital, or dispose of it for you. If you have milk stored at home this can also be donated.

Breast milk that is donated to the Milk Bank is used for babies born early or sick.

We are happy to discuss any of the above with you to help you make this decision.

If you need a breast pump to express while you are making your decisions, please let us know.

Useful sources of information

UK Association for Milk Banking,
web www.ukamb.org

Hearts Milk Bank,
web www.heartsmilkbank.org/

The Breastfeeding Network (BfN),
web www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/

Sands (Stillbirth and neonatal death society),
web www.uk-sands.org

Contact us

If you have any questions, please contact the neonatal unit, **phone** 020 7188 4045.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit
web www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

With thanks to the Milk Bank, Lactation and Bereavement specialists at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust for providing the original text upon which this leaflet is based.

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm
email letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint contact the complaints department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, **phone** 020 7188 8815 **email** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web** www.nhs.uk

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