



When a baby dies – advice for mothers about breast milk

Information to help and support you make decisions about your milk production and any breast milk you may have stored.

Introduction

This leaflet aims to give you some information about the choices you have regarding lactation and any milk you have stored for your baby. It also offers some guidance about what to do when you have decided what is right for you.

Support from the neonatal unit

You might find it useful to speak to a member of staff about your milk supply. If you have been expressing or breast feeding your baby or if you have any breast milk stored (at home or in the hospital). You may want to think about whether you want to continue producing breast milk or whether you would prefer to stop. You do not need to make any decisions straight away. Please let us know what would be helpful for you and if you need any help.

Reducing your milk supply

If you decide you would prefer to stop your milk supply, you can do this with or without the use of medication. If you choose not to use medication you would gradually reduce the number of times you express each day. It may take a number of days or weeks to stop completely. 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 blocked ducts and mastitis. Blocked ducts can be painful and you may develop flu like symptoms with mastitis. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns about this.

Steps to reduce milk production

The steps below are a suggestion. Each woman's milk production will be different and you may need to make adjustments to minimise any discomfort.

- Gradually go longer between expressions. If you have been expressing eight times a day, start by reducing to six or seven times and so on.
- Gradually express for less time in total. To start with, aim to express for approximately half the time you usually would.
- 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 and areola as this can stimulate milk production.

If you decide you would like to use medication to help stop your supply, you can take a medicine called cabergoline. The tablets are stocked at the hospital and can be ordered for you to take home. Please speak to the neonatal team or the pharmacist on the neonatal unit if you would like more information.

Other suggestions to enhance your comfort

During the time you are reducing your milk supply you may find your breasts are painful.

- Hugs from family and friends may be uncomfortable. It may be helpful to fold one arm across your chest to stop your breasts being squashed.

- Use cooled cloths on your breasts to provide pain relief and decrease swelling.
- Wear a well-fitting, non-underwire bra which supports your breasts but doesn't constrict the ducts, especially under your arms.
- You can use over-the-counter pain relief if necessary, such as paracetamol.

Your choices about your frozen breast milk

If you have breast milk stored at home or on the neonatal unit you may choose to keep it. You will need to take home any milk that you wish to keep.

We can only continue to store your milk for up to six weeks. Tell us if you would like us to dispose of any milk on the unit or if you would like to donate it to our milk bank.

Breast milk that is donated to the milk bank is used for babies born early or sick whose mothers are unable to provide their own breast milk. 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 and we will be happy to help you.

Useful sources of information

Sands (stillbirth and neonatal death society)

w: www.uk-sands.org

UK Association for Milk Banking

w: www.ukamb.org

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Neonatal Unit, **t:** 020 7188 4045 and select where you would like your call directed.

For more information leaflets on conditions, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** 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.

t: 020 7188 3003, 10am to 5pm, Mon to Fri

e: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: 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.

t: 020 7188 8815

e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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