INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Lactation suppression – for the bereaved mother

Aim
This leaflet aims to provide you with information on lactation suppression, 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. This can be a normal occurrence.

Engorgement
Engorgement is when the breasts become swollen, firm, and painful. These symptoms usually settle quickly, requiring little or no intervention. If severely engorged, they may also become hard, shiny, warm and slightly lumpy to touch.

Breast engorgement does actually help to suppress the production of breast milk. However, painful breast engorgement is not necessary and can be avoided.

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.

Mastitis is inflammation of the breast which, if left untreated, can develop into a more serious infection. You may feel flu-like symptoms including fatigue, chills and a fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 degrees celsius) or higher.

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. From natural remedies, prescribed medication and - for women who already have established breast feeding - a milk reduction routine may help.

Wear a good fitting bra, day and night.

Apply ice packs (or a bag of frozen peas) covered in a light cloth to the breast. Rotate ice packs every 10 minutes.

Consult your GP or midwife regarding medication for pain relief.

Make sure you drink plenty of fluids.

Hand expression
Although it is not advisable to empty the breasts of milk, hand-expressing a small amount, just enough to soften the breast and relieve fullness, can help to ease discomfort. Warm showers may be useful to allow the breasts to leak naturally.
**Lactation suppression routine**

If your feeding routine is already established, or you have been regularly expressing milk to feed your baby, you will need to gradually reduce the amount of milk produced in the breast.

This can be done through increasing the time between hand or pump expressing, over a few days, eventually coming to a stop.

**Medication**

Some women may wish to take medications to stop milk production rather than waiting for the natural process of lactation suppression to happen. Your GP or local hospital can prescribe medication to allow this to happen. It is important to discuss any implications and possible side effects with your doctor.

**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, where it will be used to treat premature and sick babies.

Tel: 020 838 33559  [www.ukamb.org](http://www.ukamb.org)

**Local support**

It is important that you are supported through your bereavement. Ongoing support may be available from your midwife, health visitor, GP and the Child Bereavement Team at King’s Mill Hospital or the Queen’s Medical Centre.

**National support**

SANDS

Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Charity

Helpline: 02074365881

[www.uk-sands.org](http://www.uk-sands.org)

**Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN)**

Tel: 020 7843 568900

[www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

**Child Bereavement Charity**

Tel: 01494 568900

[www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

**Winstons Wish**

Helpline: 0845 030405

General enquiries: 01242 515157

Further sources of information

Our website:  [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. Stating a web address does not imply we endorse a particular site. Neither does not stating a web address imply lack of endorsement.

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

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

Contact details:

- King’s Mill Hospital  01623 672222
  (out of hours answer phone)
  Email: Pals.kmh@sfh-tr.nhs.uk

- Newark Hospital  01636 685692
  (out of hours answer phone)
  Email: Pals.nwk@sfh-tr.nhs.uk

If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact PALS, as above.

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