

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

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# Lactation suppression for the bereaved woman/birthing parent

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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/chest will vary from person to person. If breastfeeding/chest feeding has already been established, your breasts/chest may continue to produce milk for several weeks, and expression of milk should be reduced gradually over time. You will also experience engorgement as the body suppresses milk production.

## Engorgement

Engorgement is when the breasts/chest become swollen, firm, and painful. If severely engorged, they may also become hard, shiny, warm and slightly lumpy to touch. It can happen between 30-72 hours after birth, or while reducing lactation gradually, to suppress milk production. Painful engorgement needs to be avoided.

## Mastitis

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

- For women and parents with white skin tones, a red, swollen area on the breast/chest that is hot and painful to touch.

If you have brown or black skin, please be alert to other non-visual symptoms of mastitis.

- A lump or area of hardness on the breast/chest.
- White or blood stained nipple discharge.
- Flu-like symptoms including fatigue, chills and fever.

If you display any of these symptoms it is recommended that you contact your midwife, health visitor or GP as soon as possible for support. Antibiotics are needed if symptoms are not improving in 12-24 hours, or if you are acutely ill.

## Relieving symptoms of engorgement

At first your breasts/chest may feel very full and possibly tender. To help with this we recommend you:

- Take regular pain relief, such as paracetamol.
- Wear a good fitting bra, day and night - avoid underwired bras
- Use breast pads to absorb leaking milk.
- Regularly apply cold compresses or gel packs onto the breast/chest to reduce heat and inflammation.
- To soften a very full breast/chest, have a warm bath or shower to allow the breasts/chest to leak naturally.

- Sleep in a supine (lying face upwards) position or use extra pillows to avoid pressure on tender, full breasts/chest if side-lying

### Hand expression

Hand expression can be used to relieve pressure within the breast/chest to soften the area and ease discomfort.

### Reducing your milk production

There are a variety of methods that can be used to reduce milk production.

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

If your feeding routine is already established, or you have been regularly expressing milk to feed your baby, it is extremely important not to abruptly stop expressing as this may increase the risk of severe engorgement and mastitis. We would recommend slowly reducing the amount of milk you produce. Trusted evidence says that by removing just enough milk (using a good quality pump) to reduce the discomfort, but not emptying the breast, will gradually reduce lactation.

We suggest the following:

- ✓ Reduce the time you pump by five minutes every day.
- ✓ Reduce the amount you pump by one pump session a day.

For example, if you usually pump or feed eight times for 25 minutes:

- **Day 1** - pump each breast for 20 minutes, seven times in 24 hours.

- **Day 2** - pump each breast for 15 minutes, six times in 24 hours.
- **Day 3** - pump each breast for 10 minutes, five times in 24 hours.
- **Day 4** - pump each breast for five minutes, four times in 24 hours.
- **Day 5** - pump each breast for five minutes, three times in 24 hours.
- **Day 6** - pump each breast for a few minutes, twice in 24 hours.
- **Day 7** - pump each breast once, long enough to relieve discomfort.
- **Day 8** - avoid pumping if possible and follow advice for engorgement if your breast/chest feels full.

### Medication

Two drugs are available to stop milk production. These are bromocriptine (Parlodel™) and cabergoline (Dostinex™) Both of these drugs have serious side effects - more information can be found on this link (type into your browser): <https://breastfeeding-and-medication.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/sillbirth-and-milk-supply-.pdf>

Your hospital doctor or your GP can prescribe these. It is important to discuss any implications and possible side-effects with your doctor.

### Milk donation

Not every woman/parent wants to stop lactating at this difficult time. You can continue to pump eight to ten times in 24 hours and can liaise with the UK National Milk Bank to discuss donation for premature and sick babies.

**Telephone:** 020 838 33559

**Website:** [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, infant feeding midwife (telephone 01623 622515, extension 6575), health visitor, GP, and the Child Bereavement Team at either King's Mill Hospital or the Queen's Medical Centre.

### National support

#### **SANDS**

Stillbirth & Neonatal Death Charity

Helpline: 02074 365881

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

#### **Childhood Bereavement Network UK**

Telephone: 0800 028 8840

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

#### **Winston's Wish Family Line**

Helpline: 0845 203 0405

0808 8020 021

Website: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

General enquiries: 01242 515157

### Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

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

#### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

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.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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