

We want to equip you with the tools to manage and respond to the experience of making milk following a miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal or older infant loss.

Your body starts making colostrum during your pregnancy. At around 16-20 weeks colostrum naturally turns into breastmilk through postpartum hormones. Not all birthing people will experience lactation after a loss. Some moms experience a sensation of fullness, while others produce.

Lactation support is critical after the loss of a baby.

It is essential to know your options, but most importantly, you do what feels right for you.

More lactation support topics discussed here



Lactation After Loss

Managing engorgement

Engorgement is when your breasts feel full with breastmilk, this typically begins in day 3-5 after birth, subsiding within 2-7 days of onset. Increased fluids and blood from postpartum hormones will also contribute to the swelling.

Your breasts will typically feel hard, with tightly stretched skin that may appear shiny. You may have warmth, tenderness and/or throbbing, sometimes extending to armpit. This is an expected part of your body's postpartum response.

Whatever you decide to do with your lactating breasts. If engorgement doesn't not happen to you, there is nothing wrong. All ranges of engorgement are normal.

You can either suppress lactation or sustain expression

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Collaboration & Supported by:



Fourth Trimester Foundations, LLP



The Lactation Mama

Sources:

La Leche League International
Empty Arms Bereavement Support Inc.
United States Lactation Consultant Association
Australian Breastfeeding Association
KellyMom.com

We are so sorry you are here.

We are so sorry you now know the immeasurable pain that is the death of your baby.

We want you to know that you are not alone.

We want you to know that there is no perfect way to walk through this journey and that this is not your fault.

Our hearts are with you sending gentle love and gentle courage.

Lactation suppression

If you don't express milk and you keep your breasts supported, your milk will gradually decrease.



Snug, non-wire bra, day & night (sports bra) don't bind breasts



Breast pads, change often if leaking



Minimize warm water hitting breasts



Cold/gel packs cold compress for swelling



Teas/herbs ie peppermint, sage and jasmine can dry up production



Ibuprofen (Motrin) Acetaminophen (Tylenol)



Hand express if breasts feel as firm as your forehead, then hand express for comfort in shower, then ice after



Chilled green cabbage leaves Rinse, crack, store cold and put in bra Change once wilted or every 2 hours

How long until the milk goes away?

Sometimes weeks, other times a few days. If you have an established milk supply, it will be on the longer end of this range. You may continue to leak for a couple of weeks, or even feel a let-down months after.

When you have an established milk supply:

Continue to pump to help your body slowly adjust down the demand to avoid engorgement, clogged ducts and mastitis

For example, if you pump 8x/24hours, you can drop down to 7 pumps, then 6, until you are at 1 pump for a couple of days before stopping completely. Be sure the pumps remain on similar schedule when a session is dropped.

Weaning in your body can bring up a lot of emotions as the hormones are shifting. It can be difficult to differentiate between emotions due to weaning and grief.

Clogged ducts & Mastitis

A clogged milk duct can turn into mastitis

A clogged duct will be a hard painful lump you can feel, sometimes with redness or warmth (lump not always felt). Mastitis (milk duct infection) has the symptoms of a clogged duct along with flu like symptoms (ie: fever, aches, chills).

To manage symptoms:

- apply warmth to breast prior to expression
- express every few hours until breasts have softened, while massaging them
- once clog/mastitis passes, may go back to reducing milk supply or continue expressing

Call your OB/midwife if you notice flu-like symptoms or if you do not feel relief of the clog in a few days. An oral antibiotic may be prescribed to you.

Sustained expression

Some mothers don't want to suppress their milk production after the loss of their baby. The physical act of expressing milk may allow you more time to grieve and help you begin healing physically and emotionally.

Breastmilk Donation

Formal donations can be made to a milk bank for premature babies or those in NICU.

The Milk Banking Assoc. of North America offers incredible resources, tailored to loss mothers when they are made aware.

Informal donations can be made through private groups, such as Human Milk 4 Human Babies or Eats on Feets.

You can also consider offering milk to the baby of someone you care about if they are breastfeeding and have expressed difficulty with milk supply.

Memory making with breastmilk

Breastmilk can be turned into beautiful jewelry, keepsake or memento, even with the option to combine with other items.

All you need is 1oz of milk, and the milk can be fresh or from many, many years ago.