

Making Milk after your Baby has died

We are so sorry that your baby has died. This leaflet contains information to help you make decisions regarding your milk supply after the death of your baby. If you have any further questions, please speak to a midwife or doctor caring for you.

Why will I make milk if my baby has died in pregnancy or shortly after birth?

This is due to it being a hormonal process triggered by the birth of your placenta, which follows the birth of your baby. This process occurs in any pregnancy that has lasted 16 weeks or more.

In pregnancy, your body will have started to produce colostrum, this is the very first milk. Around two to five days after your birth, your body will begin to produce larger volumes of milk. You may experience a sensation of your 'milk coming in'. For many this feels like a sense of fullness in the breast, they may feel heavy and tender. You may also leak milk.

The thought of your milk coming in, will bring around different feelings for different people. There is no right or wrong in these situations. We will go on to explain the options for you in managing your milk coming in.

What are my options?

You have three options:

1. Take medication to stop your milk coming in (if it is safe for you to take).
2. Use gentle techniques at home to lessen any discomfort and encourage your body to stop making milk.
3. Express your milk and possibly donate this milk to ill or premature babies.

Medication to try and stop your 'milk coming in'

Cabergoline is a drug that can be used to reduce the amount of prolactin (the milk making hormone) that your body produces. This can help prevent the sensations of your milk coming in and stop you making milk.

Cabergoline does have some side effects such as headaches, dizziness and nausea, which may last a few days. We would ideally give you this drug the day your baby is born as a one-off dose.

You can discuss with your midwife and obstetrician if this drug would be suitable for you to take. It may not be safe if you currently have or have had in the past any severe mental health problems, high blood pressure or issues with your heart.

Even if you take cabergoline, you may still have some feelings of fullness around days two to five. You can use some of the self-help techniques mentioned later in this leaflet.

Self-help measures

Some people may not want to take cabergoline (the medicine mentioned above) or it may not be a safe option for you or you may have taken cabergoline and still have some sensations of your milk 'coming in'.

In these circumstances there are some self-help measures you can use to minimise the discomfort of your milk coming in and to stop your body producing milk. For most people using these techniques, your chest / breasts will feel comfortable within a week. But if you were to squeeze your breasts you may see milk for some months later.

We are aiming for your breasts to be comfortably full, as a signal to your body to stop making milk.

- Wear a supportive bra like a sports bra (make sure it does not dig in to the breast anywhere).
- Take ibuprofen (check with your midwife first). This drug helps reduce the swelling in your chest.
- You can use a cold compress on your chest, such as a bag of frozen peas to help ease any hot full feelings.
- You can use your hands to hand express small amounts of milk if you feel painfully full. Aim to soften the breast but not to drain it.
- Asides from hand expressing to comfort (if needed), minimise touching / massaging / stroking your breasts.

Expressing your milk

Some people may wish to stimulate their milk supply to keep some of their milk in their freezer, to make a piece of breastmilk jewellery or to donate their expressed milk to ill or premature babies.

How do I make a piece of breastmilk jewellery?

This is done by private companies, there are many options you can find online. You can send your milk to a company for them to make it for you or you can find DIY kits to do at home. The usual amount of milk required is between 10-20mls.

If you wish to have a breastmilk stone or jewellery made, you can hand express the amount needed. You may need to do this over a few sessions. The small amount required should not go on to cause a problem with you then making lots of milk.

See the NHS website entitled 'expressing by hand' for help with a hand expressing technique. Alternatively, your midwife can show you before you leave the hospital.

How do I pump to donate milk?

The easiest way for you to donate milk is to use an electric breast pump. You could also hand express milk or use a manual pump.

You could pump and donate for a short period of time or for as long as you are comfortable to do so. If you wish to stimulate your supply and produce larger volumes of milk, it's recommended you pump between six to eight times in 24 hours, for around 15-20 minutes each time. You can massage and gently compress your breasts whilst pumping to effectively drain your breasts and encourage your body to make more milk. Using a double pump and pumping both breasts at the same time, will be most efficient for you.

Are there any special requirements to donate milk?

There are no minimum amounts to pump when you are making what's known as a loss donation but you do need to complete a health questionnaire and have some screening blood tests taken. We can link you with the milk bank at St George's and one of the nurses will talk you through the process and your eligibility or we can refer you to your local milk bank, so they can answer any questions you may have.

How do I get further information about milk donation?

If milk donation is something which interests you or if you have questions, please ask the bereavement midwives or email milk.bank@nhs.net.

www.ukamb.org/milk-banks also provides information about milk banks

Contact us

Specialist bereavement midwives: Hollie and Melanie 07425 634 970 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

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

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

