

Breast Care After a Loss

A woman's breasts begin making changes for breastfeeding early during a pregnancy. Even the loss of a baby as early as 16-17 weeks in the pregnancy can result in the full ability to produce milk. Typically 3-5 days after the delivery of the baby, the breasts will fill with milk and become engorged. This swelling may last as much as one week. These changes are a normal hormonal response. It is also normal to feel sad and disappointed for the loss of the child and breastfeeding.



To help with breast discomfort:

- Wear a supportive bra around the clock.
- Use ice packs on your breasts to control swelling.
- Ibuprofen may help with breast pain and swelling; talk to your doctor or midwife.
- A hot shower or bath may help by causing leaking of milk.
- Some mothers will pump or hand express milk for relief.

We do not suggest:

- Wrapping your breasts with bandages.
- Hot packs/towels continually to the breasts.
- Taking medications to “dry the milk up.”
- Reducing oral fluid intake.

Donating your Breastmilk

- Some mothers find it healing to pump their breastmilk and donate it to a milk bank.
- Donated breastmilk often is used for premature or ill babies in the NICU. Mother’s milk can be lifesaving for another baby. This is a difficult decision to make, but it may provide comfort knowing your milk is helping someone.
- To begin the process of donating breastmilk, visit the website of the HUMAN MILK BANKING ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA: www.hmbana.org
- Becoming a donor involves a screening process, including a phone interview, lab work, and a letter from your doctor or midwife. When talking with a representative from the milk bank, be sure to mention you have suffered a loss of a baby, and the minimum donation amount may be waived. Even if you cannot be approved as a donor, milk banks can use your milk for research or training.

Warning signs—Contact your doctor, midwife, or lactation consultant:

- Pain and lumps in the breasts
- Excessive redness in both breasts or one area of a breast
- Fever and chills

For more assistance or to speak with a Lactation Consultant, please contact your respective campus.