

Any loss in the 2nd half of a pregnancy may result in milk production.

Breast Care After the Loss of a Baby

As early as 17 weeks into a pregnancy, colostrum, the first milk, may be present in your breasts. Any loss after this time may result in milk production and breast engorgement. Your breasts may begin to have milk 3 to 5 days after delivery. It may take up to a week for your breasts to soften.

To help you reduce any breast discomfort:

- Wear a supportive bra or jogging/sports bra for support both during the day and at night.
- Use ice packs on your breasts to control swelling.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about taking Tylenol® or ibuprofen for swelling and discomfort.
- Take a hot shower or bath—the warmth may help some milk to leak out. This will not cause your breasts to make more milk. Even soaking your breasts in a pan of warm water will help.

If the above methods do not keep you comfortable, you can express a small amount of milk out. Your goal is to reduce your discomfort, not empty your breasts. It is important to remove only enough to help you tolerate the fullness. (Emptying the breast will increase milk production).

1. Place your thumb and forefinger at the 6 and 12 o'clock position on the outer margin of the areola (the dark part).
2. Press the thumb and finger into the breast—toward your back.
3. Squeeze your thumb and finger together as though you are pinching the areola. A few drops of milk will squirt out.
4. Now reposition your thumb and finger at another “time” and squeeze again.
5. Repeat these steps.

Keep in mind:

- Release only as much milk as it takes to reduce your discomfort.
- Squeezing the nipple itself will not work.

Methods that are no longer suggested are:

- Binding your breasts
- Taking medicine to “dry-up” your milk
- Limiting oral fluid

After the initial swelling is gone, your breasts will slowly return to their former size. It is normal to notice a drop or two of milk even several months later.

All these changes in your breasts are a normal hormonal response. It is also normal to feel sad when you see this milk and have no baby to nourish. You might also feel sad when your breasts stop producing milk, confirming the end of your pregnancy.

Seek out supportive friends, family members and spiritual advisors. Share with them your feelings surrounding this experience.

For more information, contact La Leche League at www.llli.org or 877.452.5324.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Lactation Consultants