Breast Feeding - Weaning After Infant Loss

In this stressful and emotional time, caring for your own needs and comfort can be hard. Since you have been breastfeeding or expressing milk for your baby, your breasts have been stimulated to produce milk. Suddenly stopping breastfeeding or pumping can lead to discomfort. In order to help you be more comfortable during this time, we have prepared these instructions. Please let us know if you have any questions or if there is anything else we can do to help you stop making breast milk.

**Emotionally:**

- The physical and hormonal changes your body is going through may add to your intense feelings of grief and pain. Be sure to take care of yourself. Try to rest, eat well, and ask for and accept help. Give yourself permission to grieve even as you continue on with other parts of your life.

**Physically**

Your body makes breast milk in response to nursing your baby or expressing the breast milk (pumping). As this stimulation decreases or stops, your body will also decrease or stop making milk. Breast fullness should decrease in 1 to 3 days. It may take several days or weeks for your breasts to completely stop making milk.

- Try to wean slowly if possible. This is more comfortable.
- Adjust your pumping schedule so that you pump less often until you are no longer pumping.
- You may feel uncomfortable due to the pressure of the breast milk. You need to express just enough breast milk to relieve fullness (with a breast pump or by hand).
- This can help with discomfort in the first few days of weaning. This will slow the process, but will make you more comfortable.
- Wear a supportive, comfortable bra until you notice the breast fullness has gone away. Do NOT bind your breasts.
- Use ice packs (covered with a thin cloth) on your breasts for 5 to 15 minutes several times a day. Avoid the nipples.
- Cold cabbage leaves can also be helpful. Place one cold, raw, green cabbage leaf on each breast and change every 2 hours, or as they wilt, until breast engorgement has passed.

See the back side of this sheet for additional information!
Physically cont:

• Take a pain reliever such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen (if you are not allergic) as needed for discomfort. Consult your physician about this. Medicine to stop milk production is no longer recommended as it can have serious side effects.
• Observe for blocked ducts (tender and painful breast lumps) or breast infection (a tender, reddened area along with fever, chills, headache, and general achiness).
• Contact your breastfeeding support person and/or your physician if either of these conditions develops.

Breast Milk Donation:

• Mothers who have lost a baby may consider donating their frozen breast milk. Many women and families find it helpful in the grieving and healing process. This can be similar to when a family chooses to donate an organ or tissue of a loved one. Many families are comforted by knowing that they can help another sick baby.
• Breast milk donations are not accepted at Children’s Mercy Hospital at this time, due to a strict screening process of all donors. Please refer to the Breast Milk Donation information provided along with this packet if you are interested in donating your breast milk to help other sick babies.

Call the Lactation Management Program Help Line at (816) 346-1309 if you have questions or concerns.