

LACTATION AFTER LOSS



It is common for a mother's body to make milk after losing a baby after 16 weeks gestation (4 months of pregnancy). Without warning, this can come as a surprise and cause distress. It may last for a few days or up to a few weeks. This guide will help to prepare you and give you options during this difficult time.

Stopping Milk Production

- Gently hand express small amounts of milk for breast comfort.
- Brief warm showers may decrease engorgement.
- Wear a comfortable bra or sports bra that is not tight.
- Apply cold compresses or bags of frozen vegetables for 10-15 minutes at a time to lessen pain and swelling.
- Some parents report that placing raw cabbage leaves in their bra can be soothing. Wash the cold leaves and crush the veins to release the enzymes.
- Others have found drinking sage or peppermint tea or applying Arnica gel (a homeopathic remedy) on the skin over engorged areas of breast might decrease milk supply. Keeping the Arnica gel in the fridge is also a cooling soothe to engorged breasts.
- Take over the counter pain relief as directed and needed.
- If you have been pumping, wean by pumping one less session each day.
- You can speak with your doctor about prescription medicines that can suppress milk production.
- Call your doctor if you experience a fever, body aches or redness in the breasts.

Donating Breast Milk after a Loss

- Human breast milk is used to feed premature and sick babies in the hospital.
- Many mothers find comfort and healing in helping others as a way to honor their baby.
- Some mothers donate stored milk, others pump specifically to donate milk.
- You may hand express or use a pump to release the milk. Some insurance companies may pay for a breast pump for this purpose. You can check with your insurance company to see if a pump is available for your use.
- Go to these websites to learn more about milk donation:

OhioHealth
Mother's Milk Bank





Milk Bank CHKD



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Using Breast Milk as a Keepsake to Remember Your Baby

- Some parents make unique jewelry using breast milk. Do It Yourself kits are available on-line.
- Breast milk can hold meaning. Moms have reported keeping a small bottle of breast milk in their freezer as a remembrance of their baby.
- Others have used their stores of milk to water a tree or plant that was planted in memory of their baby.



The Delaware Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) is a community-based program that reviews stillbirths and infant deaths. The review leads to recommendations to support families and to prevent future losses. One part of the process is a maternal or family interview, which gives families time to share their story and provide input on how we can improve the situation for others. Providing lactation after loss information was an idea that came to light from family interviews.

If you would like to share your story with us, please call 302-255-1760 or email MCDRC@delaware.gov and our bereavement outreach professional will contact you to set up a time for a phone interview. We can also provide grief support, referrals and resources to help you through this difficult time.

Other Resources to Help You Through This Journey

- The Dougy Center <https://www.dougy.org>
- Hand to Hold <https://handtohold.org/>
- March of Dimes <https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/miscarriage-loss-and-grief>
- National Share Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support <https://nationalshare.org/>
- Postpartum Support International <https://postpartum.net/>
- Return to Zero HOPE <https://rtzhope.org/>
- Star Legacy Foundation <https://starlegacyfoundation.org/>