

Lactation and Loss:

A Guide for Options After the Loss of Your Baby



The experience of losing an infant may leave you and your family with concerns. We hope this guide provides a starting place for answers to common questions about lactation after loss. Working in collaboration with your healthcare provider and a lactation care practitioner will help you to create the plan that feels most comfortable for you.

Why do I have milk?



During pregnancy, your body has been changing in preparation for birth and breastfeeding. The birth of your baby stimulates hormones that signal your body to make milk. For many, producing milk can be an additional burden of grief. For others, milk creation and expression can be a comforting connection to your baby. Human milk begins with a thick, yellow substance called colostrum and evolves into the more mature phase of milk around day 3 or 4 after delivery. It is during this transition that your breasts may feel full or leak milk. Your body will continue to make milk if there is a demand, without demand/stimulation, the body will eventually stop milk production.

Whether your milk is just coming in, or you have been making/expressing milk for awhile, you have options. Follow the path that feels right for you, take time to be gentle with yourself as each family experiences this process differently.

I want to express my milk (to keep or donate):



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To learn more about human milk donation and eligibility, contact your local milk bank.

How to donate milk



To find a Milk Bank near you, please see the following: <https://www.hmbana.org/find-a-milk-bank/overview.html>

New Mexico: Human Milk Repository of New Mexico, <https://mothersmilkbanknm.org/>; 6208 Montgomery Boulevard NE, Suite D Albuquerque, NM 87109, contact 505.508.5291, or info@mothersmilkbanknm.org.

Surrounding Areas: Mothers Milk Bank (Colorado), a program of Rocky Mountain Children's Health Foundation, <https://rmchildren.org/mothers-milk-bank/>. Contact 303.869.1888 or toll-free 833.234.0555 or mothersmilkbank@rmchildren.org.

I want to suppress/stop my milk (from the start or after milk supply has been established):



Depending on the stage of milk production, you may experience some discomfort or leaking milk. It may take time for your body to adjust and stop making milk and it is normal for you to be curious about the milk you do make. Wearing a supportive, and comfortable bra is recommended. Expressing small amounts of milk by hand or breast pump will relieve some pressure. Be sure to only express to relieve discomfort, watching for painful or red areas which may be a sign of a blocked duct or a breast infection. A warm shower or bath can stimulate milk release that will help prevent discomfort or pain without stimulating supply. Cool compresses, ice packs or refrigerated cabbage leaves can provide some relief as well. Speak with your Provider and Lactation Consultant about other remedies and safe pain relief options.

If you have an established supply, work with your lactation consultant to develop a plan to stop production. It may be helpful to slowly decrease demand to avoid engorgement or plugged ducts. Eliminating one pumping/expression session every 2-3 days can be a good choice for some families.