

Caring for Your Breasts Information for Bereaved Mothers

This information is to help you care for yourself at this difficult time. As your body recovers from pregnancy and birth, you will notice changes in your breasts. At first your breasts may become full and uncomfortable. You may leak some breast milk. These changes do not last long but you may find them upsetting. As your breasts stop making milk you will begin to feel more comfortable. Here are some ways to care for your breasts during the next few weeks.

How can I feel more comfortable?

- Wear a bra that supports your breasts but is not too tight. Put cotton breast pads inside the cups of your bra, in case your milk leaks.
- Drink when you are thirsty. You do not have to drink less fluid. You may have less appetite but try to continue eating healthy.
- If your breasts are tender or painful, a gentle massage can help. Try massaging your breasts and expressing a little breast milk during a warm shower. Expressing a small amount of milk helps you feel more comfortable and may prevent a breast infection. This does not cause your breasts to make more milk.
- You may find it soothing to put a cold compress or an ice pack on your breasts for a few minutes, several times a day. Wrap the cold compress or pack in a light cloth to protect your skin.
- You may find it helpful to take a mild pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) or ibuprofen (Advil[®] or Motrin[®]) if your breasts are full and comfortable.

When should I get help?

Call your doctor or midwife if you are concerned or notice any of these problems:

- any red, sore or warm areas on your breasts
- lumps or discoloured areas on your breasts
- you have a fever and your temperature is more than 38°C or 100°F
- your milk leaks for longer than 2 days

For questions or help call:

- your doctor or midwife
- a lactation consultant at St. Joseph's Hospital at 905-522-1155 ext. 34998
- a public health nurse at 905-546-3550