

How to stop pumping ... quickly

This information sheet was written to help you care for yourself at this difficult time. When you stop pumping your breasts, your body will gradually make less milk. During this time you need to make yourself as comfortable as possible. If you have questions or need help, please talk with the Lactation Consultant.

What is the best way to stop pumping?

The best way to stop expressing breastmilk is to gradually use the breast pump less often. It takes time for your breasts to stop making milk. The length of time it takes for milk to stop completely is different for each woman. It may take up to 2 weeks. The time depends on how much milk you were making and other factors such as stress. It is normal to still have some breastmilk or a little leaking for several weeks.

Do not suddenly stop using the breast pump or bind your breasts (wrapping your breasts tightly against your chest). This can be painful and cause problems such as plugged milk ducts or an infection called mastitis. You do not need medication to "dry up" your milk as it is not safe for mothers.

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 restrict the amount of fluids you drink. You may have less appetite, but try to continue healthy eating.

If your breasts are tender or painful, a gentle massage can help. Try massaging your breasts and expressing a little breastmilk during a warm shower. Use an ice pack on your breasts for a few minutes, several times a day.

Taking a mild pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) can help with pain or swelling.

Use the breast pump when your breasts feel very full. Pump off only enough milk to soften your breasts, not enough to empty them. You can still use this milk for your baby. Pumping will not increase the amount of milk if you don't empty your breasts.

Gradually pump less often. For example:

- If you were pumping every 3 hours, try pumping every 4 hours. Then pump every 5 hours.
- If you were pumping 6 ounces of milk each time, try pumping 5 ounces. Then only pump 4 ounces.

When should I get help?

Call the doctor, midwife or lactation consultant if you are concerned or notice:

- any red, sore or warm areas on your breasts
- lumps or discoloured areas on your breasts
- a fever - your temperature is greater than 38°C or 100°F

Where can I get help?

If you have questions or need help, you may call:

- your doctor or midwife
- the Social Worker at 905-521-2100, ext 75705 or 73210
- a Lactation Consultant at 905-521-2100, ext 72774
- a Public Health Nurse at 905-546-3550