

Caring for your breasts

Information for bereaved mothers

This information sheet was written 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 feel uncomfortable. You may have some leaking of breast milk. These changes will 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 couple of 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 fluids. 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. Expressing a small amount of milk will help you feel more comfortable and may prevent a breast infection. This will 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.

Taking a mild pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) can help if your breasts are full and uncomfortable.

When should I get help?

Call the 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
- a fever – your temperature is greater than 38° C or 100° F
- your milk leaks for longer than 2 weeks

Where can I get help?

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

- your doctor or midwife
- a Lactation Consultant for the Neonatal Nurseries at 905-521-2100, ext. 73765 or 72774
- the Social Worker for the Neonatal Nurseries at 905-521-2100, ext. 75705 or 73210 or 75551
- a Public Health Nurse at 905-546-3550