



Stopping your breastmilk

This factsheet is for people who want or need to stop their milk supply.

Why you might stop your breastmilk

People stop their breastmilk for many reasons. You might:

- not want to breastfeed anymore
- choose not to breastfeed at all
- have been advised to stop
- have experienced the death of your baby during pregnancy or after birth.

You may have other reasons that are important to you.

Deciding to stop feels different for everyone. Some people find the decision hard, while others feel ready to stop breastfeeding.

We can help you look after yourself, your feelings, and your breasts.

Stopping soon after birth

Your body starts making small amounts of milk during pregnancy. A day or two after birth, you start to make much more milk. This is called your milk 'coming in'. It happens even if you don't breastfeed.

It can take a couple of days for your milk to stop, even if you haven't breastfed or expressed your milk.

Things that can help during this time

- Your breasts will get full. Express a little milk to feel more comfortable.
- Wear breast pads if you are leaking milk.
- Put cool packs on your breasts.
- Wear a supportive bra or crop top for comfort.
- Use paracetamol or ibuprofen to help with pain relief.
- Drink when you're thirsty. Drinking less won't make your milk stop more quickly.

Stopping after your milk has come in

If your milk supply is established, it can take a few days or weeks to stop. The more milk you make, the longer it might take.

Slowly reducing the number of times you express or breastfeed will help you feel more comfortable. Try not to stop your milk supply quickly.

We recommend that you

- Reduce the number of times you express or breastfeed by one every few days. For example, if you express or breastfeed 8 times in 24 hours, try to do 7 times in 24 hours. In a few days, when your breasts feel comfortable, you can do 6 times in 24 hours, and so on.
- If expressing, slowly reduce the amount of breastmilk. For example, instead of expressing 70mls, try expressing 60mls for a day or 2, then reduce the amount again for a few days.

You'll feel more comfortable as your breasts slow down milk production

While your milk is stopping

If you have your baby with you, have someone else help with the feeds while you and your baby adjust.

If your breasts feel too full and sore, it's okay to express some milk so you feel comfortable.

Sometimes breasts can become red, sore and inflamed. This is called mastitis. Talk to your doctor or midwife if you notice these signs.

Do you need medicine to stop your milk?

No, you don't need medicine to stop your milk. Slowly reducing breastfeeding and expressing works well.

Some people may choose medicine to help slow down their milk supply.

You can ask your doctor, nurse or midwife if the medicine is right for you. If you take the medicine, it works better if taken before your milk has come in.

Even if you take the medicine, you still need to know how to express breastmilk and look after your breasts.

Donating breastmilk

Some people choose to donate their breastmilk to a milk bank. If you want to learn more, visit the Lifeblood website. lifeblood.com.au/donors/milk

If you feel sad

You might feel sad, even if stopping your breastmilk was your decision. You might find it helpful to talk to someone you trust, like a partner, friend or family member.

You can also talk to a:

- lactation consultant
- psychologist
- doctor.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association can also provide support.

If your baby died

Managing your breastmilk after your baby has died is hard. It's okay to stop your milk when you feel ready to.

You might:

- keep expressing your breastmilk until you feel ready to stop
- stop your milk as soon as possible.

For support, talk to your midwife, doctor, or the Australian Breastfeeding Association.

Resources

The Women's

Mastitis

thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets#mastitis

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Lactation after your baby dies
breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/lactation-after-your-baby-dies

Australian Red Cross Lifeblood

Donated breast milk

lifeblood.com.au/donors/milk

For more information

Australian Breastfeeding Association

You can call any time of day or night.
1800 686 268
breastfeeding.asn.au

Victorian Maternal and Child Health Line

You can call any time of day or night.
13 22 29

Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au