

*If you have any questions, ask your nurse, lactation consultant or physician.*

## Breast Care After the Loss of a Baby

Your body may produce colostrum, the first milk, as early as 17 weeks into a pregnancy. Any loss after this point may result in milk production and breast engorgement (swelling). Your breasts may begin to have milk 3 to 5 days after delivery. It may take up to a week for your breasts to soften.

### **To help you reduce any breast discomfort:**

- Wear a supportive bra or jogging/sports bra during the day and at night.
- Use ice packs on your breasts to help with swelling.
- Talk to your physician or a member of your care team about taking Tylenol® or ibuprofen for swelling and discomfort.
- Take a hot shower or bath – the warmth may help some milk to leak out. This will not cause your breasts to make more milk. Even soaking your breasts in a pan of warm water will help.

If the above tips do not keep you comfortable, you can express a small amount of milk out. Your goal is to reduce your discomfort, not empty your breasts. It is important to remove only enough to help you tolerate the fullness. (Emptying the breast will increase milk production).

How to express milk manually:

1. Place your thumb and forefinger at the 6 and 12 o'clock position on the outer margin of the areola (the dark part).
2. Press the thumb and finger into the breast – toward your back.
3. Squeeze your thumb and finger together as though you are pinching the areola. A few drops of milk will squirt out.
4. Now reposition your thumb and finger at another “time” and squeeze again.
5. Repeat these steps.

Keep in mind:

- Release only as much milk as it takes to reduce your discomfort.
- Squeezing the nipple itself will not work.

Methods that are no longer suggested are:

- Binding your breasts
- Taking medicine to “dry-up” your milk
- Limiting oral fluid

After the initial swelling is gone, your breasts will slowly return to their former size. It is normal to notice drops of milk even several months later.

All these changes in your breasts are a normal hormonal response. It is also normal to feel sad when you see this milk and have no baby to nourish. You might also feel sad when your breasts stop producing milk, confirming the end of your pregnancy.

Seek out supportive friends, family members and spiritual advisors. Share your feelings with them and accept their help.

For more information, contact La Leche League at [lila.org](http://lila.org) or 877.452.5324.