

## Weaning after infant loss

At Children's Hospitals and Clinics, we support you during this difficult time. Your feelings are stronger because of the physical and hormonal changes in your body. Your breasts have been prepared to nurse. As long as your breasts sense a "demand" for milk, they will keep making it. If there is no demand, they will gradually stop. In order to help you feel more comfortable during this time, we have prepared these instructions. Please let us know if you have any questions, or if there is anything else we can do to support you.

### How can I reduce discomfort?

You will feel uncomfortable for a few days due to the pressure of the breastmilk. If your breasts feel full and tender at times, express just enough milk, by hand or with a breast pump, as needed for comfort. This will decrease the chance of plugged milk ducts or engorgement.

Wear a comfortable but supportive bra that does not restrict your circulation. **Do not** bind your breasts. This practice is outdated, can be very uncomfortable, and can lead to plugged milk ducts or a breast infection.

**If you have been using a breast pump,** stopping the pumping abruptly may make your breasts too uncomfortable. Instead, adjust your schedule so that, over time, you pump less and less. For example, if you have been pumping 6 times in 24 hours, drop to 5 times in 24 hours for a day or two. Then drop to 4 times in 24 hours. Continue this process until you are no longer pumping at all.

Ice can help reduce swelling and make you more comfortable as your milk supply is decreasing. Ice your breasts for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, at least 4 times each day, or as needed for comfort. Avoid the nipples.

Wash cold, raw, green cabbage leaves and crush the leaf veins to release the enzymes. Place "compresses" of these leaves inside your bra cups. Replace cabbage leaves about every 2 hours, or as they wilt, until your milk supply decreases. Often women feel relief in as little as 2 hours.

Use a pain reliever such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Medicine to stop milk production is no longer recommended, as it can have serious side effects.

### When should I call the doctor?

Call if you have signs of breast infection:

- fever, aching, or feeling ill
- pain, tenderness, or warmth in breasts

### What else do I need to know?

Sometimes the breasts continue to produce a few drops of milk for weeks, months, or longer after weaning. Avoid nipple stimulation, as this may cause a small supply of milk to continue.

### Questions?

This sheet is not specific to you, but provides general information. If you have questions, please call your doctor or a lactation consultant at Children's:

Minneapolis (612) 813-7654  
St. Paul (651) 220-7126