

Let's Talk About...



Stopping breastmilk production

Women stop breastfeeding for many different reasons. At one time, medication was given to stop a mother's milk. That method is no longer approved for treatment in the United States. We now use a natural method.

Should I just stop?

Stopping milk production suddenly can cause pain, engorgement (clogged milk ducts), and put you at risk for a breast infection. It is better to stop production gradually.

Frequent emptying and stimulation of the breast increases milk supply. Emptying the breast less often and preventing breast stimulation will decrease milk supply. By following these instructions, you will remain comfortable as your body stops producing milk.

What should I do?

- Use your breast pump when your breasts feel very full. Do not wait until your breasts are very hard. Do not empty the breast; pump just enough milk to relieve the pressure. When milk is left in the breast, the brain gives a signal to slow down and eventually stop milk production. As your milk supply decreases, you will no longer need to pump your breasts to remain comfortable.
- After pumping, use ice packs or a package of frozen peas on each breast. To avoid freezing the skin, lay a thin towel over your breasts and lay the ice pack on the towel. The ice will help decrease milk production.

- If you have trouble letting down your milk, a warm washcloth can be used briefly, but warmth will increase swelling and should not be used often.
- Wear a sports bra to keep clothes from brushing against your nipple and stimulating it. Do not bind the breasts, which will decrease circulation and may cause your milk ducts to become plugged.
- Take an anti-inflammatory (an-tee-in-FLAM-a-tor-ee) medication, like ibuprofen, to decrease the pain and swelling during the first week. An antihistamine (an-tee-HISS-tah-meen), like Benedryl® may also aid in decreasing milk production.
- Drink plenty of water and eat foods that have a lot of water in them, like soup, milk, fruits, vegetables, salad greens, and juice smoothies.

Do not squeeze the breast to see if there is milk present. You can stimulate more milk production if you do. Small amounts of milk may remain in the breast for up to one month.

How long does it take?

It may take a few days or a week to stop milk production. How soon you stop will depend on how much milk you are currently producing and how quickly your body responds to the process.

For more information, contact:

The Intermountain Breastfeeding Center, at
801.662.3686.



Pediatric Education Services
801.662.3500 Rev. 3/04
© Primary Children's Medical Center 2004

All of the information contained in the *Let's Talk About...series* is for educational purposes only. This educational information is not a substitute for medical advice or for care from a physician or other health care professional. If you have questions about your child's health, contact your health care provider.