

## Let's Talk About...

# Breast milk production, stopping

Women stop breastfeeding for many different reasons. At one time, mothers received medicine to stop their milk production. That method is no longer approved for treatment in the United States. Now, we use a natural method.

## Should I just stop breastfeeding and pumping?

If you stop suddenly, you can experience pain engorgement (clogged milk ducts). You are also at risk for a breast infection. It is better to stop producing breast milk gradually.

Frequently emptying and stimulating 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 to stop producing milk?

- Use your breast pump or express milk by hand when your breasts feel very full or painful. Do not wait until your breasts are very hard.
- Do not empty your 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, gel packs or a package of frozen peas on each breast for 5–15 minutes at a time. 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.
- Try using green cabbage leaves instead of ice packs or frozen peas. Wash, dry and put the cabbage leaves in a bag in the refrigerator. A plastic zippered bag works well. Strip the large vein in the cabbage leaf by crushing it in your hands. Apply the cabbage leaf directly to your breast. Leave it on your breast until the leaf begins to wilt. Repeat as desired, replacing the cabbage leaf every 2 hours. The cabbage leaf will help decrease milk production. The cabbage leaf does not need to be cold to be effective.
- If you have trouble letting down or releasing your milk, use a warm washcloth briefly. You may also try standing in a hot shower or sitting in a warm bath, allowing warm water to massage your breasts. These techniques may help your body release milk. However, warmth will increase swelling and should not be used often.



