

Breast and Chest Changes and Milk Coming In

Understanding what may happen to your body

After pregnancy, your breasts or chest may begin producing milk, even when your baby has died.

This can be an incredibly difficult physical reminder of your loss. You may experience breast or chest changes at a time when you are already dealing with intense emotional pain.

There is no right or wrong way to feel about this.

What might happen?

As your hormones change following pregnancy, you may notice:

- Your breasts or chest becoming larger, fuller or heavier.
- Tenderness or aching.
- Milk leaking.
- Feeling very full or uncomfortable.
- Areas that feel firm or lumpy.
- A feeling of pressure or tightness.

Milk production commonly increases around **2–5 days after birth**, although everyone's experience is different.

If you do not want to express milk

For many people, the aim will be to allow milk production to gradually reduce.

You may find it helpful to:

- Wear a supportive, comfortable bra if this feels comfortable for you.
- Use breast pads if you are leaking.
- Place cool packs or cooled gel packs over your breasts/chest for short periods to help with discomfort.
- Avoid unnecessary stimulation of the breasts/chest.
- Allow your body time to gradually reduce milk production.

You do not need to make any decisions immediately. Your healthcare team can talk through your options with you.

If you choose to express milk

Some people choose to express milk for a variety of personal reasons. This may feel meaningful for some and distressing for others.

There is **no right choice**.

If you choose to express, your midwife or another healthcare professional can support you with a plan that feels appropriate for you.

Looking after yourself

Breast or chest changes can bring up strong emotions.

You may feel sadness, anger, disbelief, numbness or even guilt. You may find that seeing or touching your breasts/chest feels particularly difficult.

Try to be gentle with yourself.

You can ask someone you trust to support you with practical things, such as getting breast pads, helping with cold packs or talking to your healthcare team.

Signs of infection

Contact your GP, midwife or maternity team if you develop:

- A hot, swollen or increasingly painful area.
- Redness that is spreading.
- Fever or chills.
- Flu-like symptoms.
- Feeling increasingly unwell.
- Severe or worsening breast/chest pain.

These symptoms can indicate mastitis or another problem that may need treatment.

If you feel very unwell or develop severe symptoms, seek urgent medical advice.

You can ask for support

Your midwife, GP or maternity team can support you with managing milk production and breast/chest changes following your loss.

You can ask questions about:

- **Stopping milk production**
- **Expressing milk**
- **Pain relief**
- **Comfort measures**
- **Medication**
- **Signs of infection**

You do not have to make this decision alone.

Most importantly

Your body may continue doing things that you desperately wish it would not have to do.

This is not your fault.

Whatever you choose to do with your milk, there is no right or wrong way to respond.

Be gentle with yourself and allow yourself the time and support you need.