

Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding After Surgery

Is it safe?



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Your milk is the best food for your baby. We encourage you to breastfeed or chestfeed as soon as possible after surgery. We are here to support you.

In this booklet, we use 'breastfeed' and 'chestfeed'. You might prefer a different word such as 'nurse'. Let your family, friends, and care providers know what word you prefer.

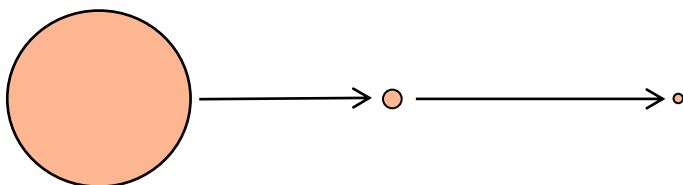
Breastfeeding or chestfeeding after surgery

People need different medicines during and after surgery. Some parents worry about how they affect their milk and baby.

Medicines break down and leave your body soon after you get them. While small amounts can enter your milk, most medicines do not affect your baby. **It is safe to breastfeed or chestfeed after getting most medicines.**

Research tells us it is safe for the following babies to drink the first milk after surgery:

- babies born when the person giving birth is between 39 to 40 weeks pregnant
- older babies



Amount of medicine
in your dose
100%

Amount of medicine
in your milk
0.5% to 10%

Amount of medicine
your baby can get
Less than 10%

Your healthcare team might suggest not breastfeeding or chestfeeding your baby for 6 to 12 hours after surgery if:

- your baby was born before you were 37 weeks pregnant
- your baby has medical concerns such as a heart condition or lung condition

During this time, you can pump your milk as often as your baby usually feeds. Throw away this milk, or freeze it and give it to your baby when they are older. For 6 to 12 hours after surgery, feed your baby milk pumped before your surgery.

Before your surgery

During the week before surgery, pump and keep your milk in the fridge. Your baby can drink this milk while you are in surgery.

Talk to your surgeon or another member of your healthcare team. Tell them you breastfeed or chestfeed. Ask if you can have surgery early in the day. This way, you spend less time away from your baby.

If you need to stay in the hospital after surgery, arrange for an adult to stay with you and your baby while you recover. This adult can help care for your baby.

On the day of surgery, feed your baby slightly before leaving home. If baby is with you at the hospital, feed them before entering the area where you wait for surgery, called the preoperative area.

Bring these supplies with you to the hospital: a pump and bags to collect your milk. If your baby is not at the hospital before surgery, pump when they usually feed. You can pump more than one time if there is any delay to surgery. Pump a few minutes before going to the preoperative area.

If you pump, ask your family or friend to keep your milk safe for your baby. Bring a cooler with ice packs to the hospital to help keep your milk safe.



After your surgery

Your surgery and the medicines used during and after surgery can make you feel weak and sleepy. Also, after some surgeries, it is not safe to lift anything over 4 to 5 kilograms (10 pounds), including babies.



A 4 litre milk jug weighs 4 kg (9 pounds)

To help keep you and your baby safe after surgery:

- Feed your baby when you are awake and can hold them safely. Stay awake while feeding.
- Ask an adult to stay with you while you recover from surgery. They can help care for you and your baby.

Research tells us it is safe for babies to drink the first milk after surgery. If your baby is not at the hospital after surgery, pump. Ask your family or friend to keep your milk safe for your baby.

Medicines during and after surgery and your milk

Before surgery, to help keep your milk safe for your baby, tell your healthcare team you breastfeed or chestfeed. This helps them choose the best medicines for you during and after surgery. The surgeon sees you in the preoperative area before surgery.

General anesthesia

Most surgeries use general anesthesia to help people sleep. If you get general anesthesia, you can breastfeed or chestfeed as soon as you are awake and can hold your baby safely.

Pain medicines

After surgery, you might need pain medicines. Remind your healthcare team that you breastfeed or chestfeed. This helps them choose medicines that keep your milk safe for your baby.

These medicines are safe if you breastfeed or chestfeed:

acetaminophen (Tylenol®)	ketorolac (Toradol®)
ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®)	hydromorphone
naproxen (Naprosyn®, Aleve®)	morphine
diclofenac (Voltaren®)	fentanyl

If you breastfeed or chestfeed, it is best not to take these medicines: codeine and tramadol.

Sedatives

Some people use sedatives to help them relax. These include midazolam, diazepam, and lorazepam.

Tell your healthcare team if you have been taking sedatives before surgery. Talk to them before you breastfeed or chestfeed after surgery.

Antiemetics

These medicines can help if you feel sick to your stomach (nausea) or are throwing up (vomiting).

The following antiemetics are safe for parents who breastfeed or chestfeed:

Dimenhydrinate (Gravol)
Metoclopramide (Maxeran)
Ondansetron (Zofran®)

Local anesthesia

Some surgeries use local anesthesia to numb an area of the body. This helps prevent pain. If you had local anesthesia, talk to your healthcare team before you breastfeed or chestfeed after surgery.

Have questions?

Call your family doctor or nurse practitioner.

Contact **Fraser Health Virtual Care** to speak with a registered nurse 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., every day.

Phone: 1-800-314-0999

Chat live online:

Scan this QR code.

Visit fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare.



Call **HealthLinkBC** to speak with a registered nurse any time, day or night.

Phone: 8-1-1
604-215-8001

HealthLinkBC is available in 130 languages.

For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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