

# **Managing Breast Fullness After the Loss of Your Baby**



Please accept our heartfelt sympathy for your loss.

Our thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time.



Take time.  
Be gentle with yourself.



Do what feels right for you.  
Whichever choice you make, we support you.

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In this booklet, healthcare provider refers to family doctor, midwife, or nurse practitioner. Throughout this resource, we use the term breast. We acknowledge that some people may be uncomfortable with this term. If you prefer a different term to breast, please let your care team know.

## Breast Fullness

During this time of grief and sadness, your body will go through other changes. You need to know that in about 4 to 6 days your milk supply will likely increase. This can be uncomfortable, both physically and emotionally.

People often just put up with the breast fullness until the milk begins to 'dry up'. Some people have found some comfort in donating their milk.

Please take time to review the options, and choose what is best for you.

## Option 1: 'Drying Up'



It can take 1 to 2 weeks for your milk to dry up - or longer if you express or pump your milk. During this time, it can be uncomfortable.

Tips to help ease the discomfort:

- Wear a comfortable, supportive bra day and night. If it is too tight or has underwires, it can cause blocked ducts. For this reason, you should not bind your breasts.
- Wear nursing pads to absorb leaking milk. Make sure you change them when they get damp.
- Try cold compresses on your breasts for 15 to 20 minutes, as needed during the day. One study showed cold cabbage leaves work just as well as cold compresses.

- Consider taking acetaminophen [Tylenol or store brand] and/or ibuprofen [Advil, Motrin, or store brand]. Follow the directions on the package.
- Express or pump a little milk. Express only enough to feel comfortable. Too much expressing makes more milk.
- Some people find it can help to take a warm shower and just let the milk flow a little. It is best not to put heat on your breasts since it could increase swelling.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you want to know more about taking a medicine that might help dry up your milk. Often you need to take these medicines shortly after the birth for them to work.

### **Cautions:**

- Drink when you are thirsty. Drinking fewer fluids doesn't mean you make less milk.
- Massage any red, hard, painful areas in the breast, as it could become an infection in your breast called "mastitis".  
Use gentle pressure toward your nipple. If massaging does not help, call your healthcare provider or your Public Health Unit for help.

See your healthcare provider as soon as possible if you have:

- a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F), chills or feeling cold all over
- redness, warmth, and swelling in the breast that does not get better
- pain in breasts continues or gets worse
- feel unwell with body aches and an overall feeling of tiredness or no energy



## Option 2: Donating your milk

Some people find comfort in donating their milk to help sick or tiny babies.

The Provincial Milk Bank collects, processes, and sends donated human milk to maternity hospitals and Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) across B.C.

If you are interested in donating your milk, check with the Milk Bank to see if you qualify (online or by phone). Most people can donate their milk if they are healthy, live in Canada, and do not smoke, use drugs, or take medicines.

Each donor must go through a screening process over the phone or in-person. This is to make sure the donated milk is safe. You will be asked to answer some questions about your health (takes 5 minutes), fill in some forms, and have some blood tests. They do blood tests to check for certain diseases.

You can find the initial *Expression of Interest* form and process on the Milk Bank website, under the *Donating Milk* tab (see the next page).

After you complete the initial form, it can take 1 to 2 weeks for the Milk Bank to contact you. In the meantime, you should start pumping to keep your milk supply. Learn how to collect and save your milk correctly by checking the Milk Bank web site.

Common reasons why you might not qualify as a donor:

- You take any medication on a regular basis, including antidepressants (there are some exceptions to this).
- You smoke or use of tobacco products.
- You test positive for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), HTLV (Human T-lymphotropic Virus), hepatitis B or C, or syphilis.
- You are at risk, or your partner is at risk, for HIV.
- You lived or traveled in certain countries.
- You used drugs in the last five years.

### To learn how to express and save your milk:



Go to [fraserhealth.ca](http://fraserhealth.ca)

Search “expressing breast milk”



Ask for and read our brochure

“Using a breast pump” or [tinyurl.com/y83keufq](http://tinyurl.com/y83keufq)



Watch this video [youtu.be/KIS2Y8LiIBQ](https://youtu.be/KIS2Y8LiIBQ)

“Collecting and storing milk for donation”



### To learn more about donating your milk



[bcwomensmilkbank.ca](http://bcwomensmilkbank.ca)



604-875-3743



A QR code (short for ‘quick response’ code) is a type of barcode that you scan with your smart device’s camera. Once scanned, it takes you to that web page.

Once you complete the screening process, the Milk Bank:

- accepts any amount of milk as long as it is saved correctly
- gives you instructions on how to collect and save your donated milk
- asks you to choose a location to drop off your donation
- sends your paperwork to that location

Please call your chosen Public Health Unit. Ask when you can drop off your milk donations.

If you want to change where you are going to drop off your milk donation, call your chosen Public Health Unit at least a day before. This is so that they can send your paperwork to that location. Then call the new location and arrange to drop off your milk donation.

## Public Health Unit Milk Collection Depots

	Weekdays	Weekends Statutory Holidays
Abbotsford	604-864-3400	604-864-3418
Agassiz	604-793-7160	1-866-320-7582
Burnaby	604-918-7605	604-918-7601
Chilliwack	604-702-4900	604-702-4903
Cloverdale	604-575-5100	604-575-5101
Delta North	604-507-5400	604-507-5462
Delta South	604-952-3550	604-507-5462
Guildford	604-587-4750	604-587-4761
Hope	604-860-7630	1-866-320-7582
Langley	604-539-2900	604-613-2872
Maple Ridge	604-476-7000	604-897-4892
Mission	604-814-5500	604-217-1205
Newton	604-592-2000	604-592-2049
New Westminster	604-777-6740	604-527-4806
Surrey North	604-587-7900	604-587-7908
TriCities	604-949-7200	604-949-7220
White Rock/ Surrey South	604-542-4000	604-542-4073

Thank you for considering donating your milk.

[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

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

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