



## **Stopping my milk supply**

## Breast or Chest Tissue Fullness

There can be many reasons why you might need to stop your milk supply.

You might choose to stop your milk supply (wean) quickly for personal or medical reasons.

This can be before or after your milk supply is established

The next few pages will help you choose what works best for you and your child.

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In this brochure, we refer to the breastfeeding person as parent. If you identify with or prefer different terms, tell your health care team so they can use them for you.

Fraser Health is inclusive of all identities, genders and sexual orientations.

You will also hear us talk about your health care provider. We use this term to refer to your family or clinic doctor, midwife, nurse practitioner, specialist or other health service provider you may visit for your medical and health care needs.

If you have just had a baby, your milk supply will likely increase in about 3 to 5 days even if you do not breastfeed, chestfeed or pump. This will make your breast or chest tissue full. This is called engorgement and can be uncomfortable.

### **Did you know?**

Your breast or chest tissues have a special feedback system to reduce the amount of milk produced. When your breasts or chest tissue stay full, your body gets the message to make less milk. This can take some time.

### **Stopping your milk quickly**

Stopping your milk quickly is also known as drying up. Sudden drying up can make the small ducts or tubes in your breast or chest tissues blocked and swollen. This can be red, hard and painful. This is called mastitis.

Mastitis can be caused by bacteria, yeast or thrush. It can also be caused by allowing milk to stay in your tissues for a long time, such as when you are stopping your milk supply.

### **Helpful things to do when stopping your milk**

- Wear a comfortable, supportive bra. As your breast or chest tissue size gets bigger from fullness, your bra might get too tight. This can cause blocked ducts. These are hard, painful lumps in your breasts or chest tissues. Your bra should not be tight or pinch your breast or chest tissue. This can block the breast or chest tissues and plug ducts.
- Wear a sports bra. Some parents find that stretchy sports bras have more flexible support compared to underwire bras. They stretch as your breast or chest tissue size changes.
- Use breast pads (absorbent nursing pads) to soak up any leaking milk. Change them when they are wet.

- Try putting cold packs to your breasts or chest tissue for 15 to 20 minutes, as needed during the day. This will help bring down the swelling. One study showed cold cabbage leaves (from the fridge) work just as well as cold compresses.

### **Did you know?**

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

- Take pain medicine like ibuprofen [Advil or Motrin] if your breasts or chest tissues are painful. These medications will help with the swelling and pain. Follow the directions on the package.
- Try very light sweeping motions over your skin using a very gentle touch. This is called lymphatic (lim-fa-tik) drainage. Make these gentle sweeping motions toward your underarm and chest wall.
- Take a warm shower and let the milk flow a little. Try not to put heat on your breasts or chest since it could make the swelling worse.

## Points to remember

When breast or chest tissues become very hard 3 to 4 days after birth, or from not removing milk, this is called engorgement.

- Drink when you are thirsty. Drinking less does not mean you make less milk.
- Use very light sweeping motions over your skin and a very gentle touch. Make gentle sweeping motions from your nipple toward your underarm and chest. Try not to massage too hard. That could damage swollen breast tissue or chest tissue and make the swelling worse.

## When to see a health care provider

See your health care provider as soon as possible if you any of the following:

- a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- pain in your breast or chest tissue that does not go away or gets worse
- muscle aches
- chills
- fast heartbeat
- feeling like you have the flu

If you have a higher than normal temperature, or an area over on of your breasts, or side is red, hard and painful, this could be an infection of your breast or chest tissue, called mastitis.

Continue your comfort measures while you wait to see your health care provider

## Gradual drying up

If you have been breast or chestfeeding for a while, it is known as gradual drying up.

It is best to slowly stop over a few weeks. When you stop breast or chestfeeding, it can make your breast or chest tissues full and hard. This can be painful for a few days until your body gets the message to stop making milk.

Helpful things you can do to gradually dry up:

- If you have time, slowly stopping could help your body adjust.
- You can skip one feeding every one or two depending on how it's going. Replace with formula or other appropriate food for your baby depending on your baby's age.
- Wait longer between feedings or pumping.
- You can distract your baby from breast or chestfeeding with other activities that they enjoy such as walking, playing, singing, cuddling or reading. Be sure to replace any missed calories as well.
- Make sure you find other ways to bond with and comfort your baby. Weaning can be stressful for your baby. Lots of cuddling will help during this change.

## Parenting While Weaning

Sometimes you need to wean while your baby is still with you. This might be suddenly or gradually. The following will talk about some ways to do this.

### Baby-led Weaning

If you have more time to wean, let your child slowly stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding at their own pace. This gives your body time to adjust.

Follow the steps below for baby-led weaning:

- 1. Plan ahead:** Choose a time that is not stressful to start. Starting to wean your child on your first day of work, their first day of childcare, or during a move, can add to the stress of these situations.
- 2. Start slowly:** Replace one feeding every day for the first week. You can pick a feeding that is the least comfort for your child. This usually is the late afternoon feeding. To make sure your child has enough nutrition, replace the skipped feeding with your own expressed milk and food.
- 3. Skip one more:** After one week, or when you feel comfortable, replace one more feeding.
- 4. Continue to skip:** Keep replacing one feeding each week with food and other fluids.

**5. Last to go:** Last of all, replace the feeding that gives the most comfort to your child. These are usually the morning and bedtime feedings. When you are ready to stop these last feedings it might help to have your partner or another family member take over the bedtime routines for a while.

**6. Lots of comfort and cuddles:** Your toddler might need even more attention and love during and after weaning. Be ready to give lots of comfort and cuddles.

## **How long before the milk goes away?**

Some things can affect how long it takes for your milk to go away. This can be things such as:

- The age of your child and how much milk you are making.
- How much milk you were expressing or pumping.
- How much you are breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
- A new pregnancy could affect the milk you are making

It can take a few days to a few weeks for milk to go away completely. You might leak sometimes until your milk goes away. Every parent's experience will be a little different.

## **Take care of yourself**

Weaning can often be challenging for parents too. Be gentle with yourself. Be sure to bond with your child in different ways, so you continue to have the special time.

Ask for help if you need it. Reach out to your support person family, La Leche League 811 or Virtual Care.

## For more information

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### Fraser Health

Weaning:

[fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding/weaning-from-breastfeeding-chestfeeding#.YzHQSfMI2w](https://fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding/weaning-from-breastfeeding-chestfeeding#.YzHQSfMI2w)

Baby-led Weaning:

[fraserhealth.ca/news/2018/Jan/baby-led-weaning#.YzHTxdfMI2w](https://fraserhealth.ca/news/2018/Jan/baby-led-weaning#.YzHTxdfMI2w)

Virtual Care:

[fraserhealth.ca/patients-and-visitors/fraser-health-virtual-care](https://fraserhealth.ca/patients-and-visitors/fraser-health-virtual-care)

### HealthLinkBC

Weaning:

[healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/parenting-babies-0-12-months/feeding-your-baby/weaning](https://healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/parenting-babies-0-12-months/feeding-your-baby/weaning)

Tips for weaning a toddler:

[healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/parenting-toddlers-12-36-months/mealtime-and-your-toddler/breastfeeding-weaning](https://healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/parenting-toddlers-12-36-months/mealtime-and-your-toddler/breastfeeding-weaning)

### La Leche League International

Weaning: [llei.org/breastfeeding-info/weaning-how-to/](https://llei.org/breastfeeding-info/weaning-how-to/)

Mastitis: [llei.org/breastfeeding-info/mastitis/](https://llei.org/breastfeeding-info/mastitis/)

### La Leche League Canada

Mastitis: [llc.ca/mastitis-matter-inflammation](https://llc.ca/mastitis-matter-inflammation)

### Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine

Mastitis: [bfmed.org/assets/ABM%20Protocol%20%2336.pdf](https://bfmed.org/assets/ABM%20Protocol%20%2336.pdf)

	<b>Weekdays</b>	<b>Weekends Statutory Holidays</b>
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	604-539-2900
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

## Notes

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

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

Catalogue #268091 (September 2023)

For more copies: [patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca](http://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca)