

Suppression of lactation

Once you decide that you will not breastfeed your baby, you may find the following information helpful.

Although colostrum can be present during the second trimester, hormones that suppress the full production of breast milk during pregnancy are at high levels in your body. With the delivery of the baby and the placenta, these hormone levels drop rapidly, and your body will start the process of producing milk. When the milk comes in, usually about 48 to 72 hours after delivery, your breasts may be full and uncomfortable.

If you don't plan to breastfeed, it's best to avoid stimulation to your breasts — this may cause your body to release the hormones that stimulate continued breast milk production.

Engorgement, leakage and discomfort tend to peak on the fourth postpartum day and gradually decrease over the next 10 to 12 days.

Helpful steps you can take during this period include:

- Wearing a supportive, well-fitting bra within six hours after delivery. Avoid bras with underwire. A sports bra works well.
- Minimizing stimulation to the breasts. Avoid extended warm showers.
- Placing ice packs on your breasts and underarms for comfort and to reduce the swelling. Frozen packs of peas or corn work well, as they conform to the shape of your breast. Be sure to wrap ice packs or frozen veggies in a thin towel or other cloth to protect your skin.
- Taking ibuprofen if you're not allergic to it. It often can relieve pain and reduce swelling.
- Expressing just enough milk to relieve the pressure if your breasts become too uncomfortable. Over-pumping can cause your breasts to make more milk.
- Using nursing pads for milk leakage, if needed.
- Avoiding excessive salt intake.
- Do NOT limit fluid intake. This can lead to dehydration.

Center for Breastfeeding Support

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