

Some women need to suppress their milk supply for medical or personal reasons. The following handout explains what to expect when suppressing and how to stay comfortable.

Suppressing milk from birth

If you are suppressing from birth, your breasts are likely to still feel warm and tender around day 3-5. If your breasts are well supported and you limit the amount of milk removed, milk supply will decrease with time.

The following measures may help you stay more comfortable:

1. Avoid unnecessary touching of the breasts
2. Support the breasts with a well fitted bra (wire free) or supportive top
3. Apply cold packs for 20 minutes every 1-2hrs or as needed.
4. Allow milk to leak or hand express a small amount of milk if the breasts are full and uncomfortable. Pumping is not recommended.
5. Take pain relief, if required, according to manufacturer's directions or doctor's orders
6. Maintain a normal fluid intake. Reducing fluids will not help.

It is preferable to suppress lactation with the above methods. Medication is available to help stop the production of breastmilk, but natural suppression is preferred. Please speak to your doctor if you would like to discuss whether medications are right for you.

Suppression milk in the weeks or months following birth

If you have been breastfeeding for a few weeks or months, stopping abruptly increases the risk of developing mastitis and breast abscess. For this reason, gradual suppression is strongly recommended. This involves gradually reducing the amount of milk removed over a few days or weeks until your breasts are no longer making sufficient milk. The comfort measures described above may help you stay comfortable during this time. Please note it is normal to be able to express a few drops of milk in the weeks and months following suppression.

You can gradually reduce your supply by:

1. Reducing the number of breastfeeds per day gradually. For example, replace one breastfeed every few days with a breast milk substitute (infant formula if baby is less than 12 months old).
2. If expressing, gradually reduce the number of times you express per day and only express enough milk for comfort. Feed baby to need with expressed breast milk and breast milk substitute (infant formula if baby is less than 12 months old).

Monitoring the breasts

If your breasts become red, hot, swollen and/or you develop flu-like symptoms whilst suppressing, you may have blocked ducts or mastitis. If this happens see your GP immediately. You can find more information in our patient handouts on **Management of Mastitis** and **Breast Fullness - Engorgement** available on our website at www.sah.org.au/maternity-education/.

San Maternity

Suppression of Lactation

Breastfeeding Information – Handout 16

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For more information:

Australian Breastfeeding Association

p: 1800 686 268

w: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Sydney Adventist Hospital Lactation Department

p: 02 9480 4071

w: www.sah.org.au/maternity

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