

Breastmilk suppression (stopping breastfeeding)

Information for patients and carers

Breastmilk suppression is when a mother does not start breastfeeding after birth, or she stops breastfeeding or expressing. This may be out of necessity or choice. The following guidelines will help you achieve this with minimum discomfort.

The decision to suppress your breastmilk may not be easy to reverse. If you are not sure if you want to suppress, some extra support might help you to keep breastfeeding if that is what you would like to do.

It is normal to feel strong emotions at this time, from worry, to relief, to sadness, and a mixture of different emotions. At these times it can be helpful to talk with someone about how you feel. You can speak with your Midwife, Nurse, Doctor, Maternal Child Health Nurse, Lactation Consultant or a breastfeeding counsellor (see useful contacts).

If you are suppressing right after birth.

If your breasts are not stimulated, only a small amount of milk will be produced at first. This will gradually reduce over the first week or so. During this time you may feel some discomfort. The following may help:

- If your breasts feel full and painful you can hand express a small amount of milk for comfort. However try to avoid stimulating milk production by expressing too much. Ask your midwife to show you how to hand express if you don't know how.
- Wear a firm but not tight bra or crop top day and night until your breasts feel softer.
- Gently massage your breasts under the shower, allowing some of the milk to leak.
- If you are leaking milk you can wear breast pads.
- Covered cold packs, paracetamol or ibuprofen may help to relieve pain.

If you have been breastfeeding.

- Suppress gradually over a week to a month depending on how much milk you are producing.
- If you stop suddenly, you might increase your risk of mastitis or breast abscess.
- If you are still breastfeeding, slowly reduce the number of breastfeeds by replacing one feed every day or so with formula.
- If you can't breastfeed anymore, you will need to express and gradually reduce the number of times you express each day.
- If you have been only expressing, slowly reduce the length of time and number of expressions each day.
- If your breasts become uncomfortable, breastfeed your baby or express a little to relieve discomfort.
- Wear a firm but not tight bra or crop top day and night until the breasts feel softer.
- Gently massage your breasts under the shower, allowing some of the milk to leak.
- If you are leaking milk you can wear breast pads.
- Covered cold packs, paracetamol or ibuprofen may help to relieve pain.



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If you have mastitis

- Mastitis is when the breast becomes inflamed or infected. The breast becomes red, swollen and sore and the mother may feel very unwell.
- It is not advisable to stop breastfeeding when you have mastitis, as this increases your risk of developing a breast abscess.
- If you have mastitis and want to suppress your breastmilk, you should wait until the mastitis has resolved, then start to gradually suppress over a few days or weeks.
- However, if you do decide to stop breastfeeding when you have mastitis, you should see your local doctor. You may need to have antibiotic therapy.
- Discuss your feeding choice with your Maternal and Child Health Nurse to ensure you have the right information for the age and needs of your baby.

Re-lactation

Re-lactation is when a woman stops breastfeeding then decides to start again.

Depending on how long since breastfeeding stopped, it may sometimes be possible to start again.

If you would like to find out more about this, you should speak with a Lactation Consultant, your Maternal and Child Health Nurse or Australian Breastfeeding Association Breastfeeding Counsellor

Important

If you are suppressing your breastmilk, please see your doctor or go to the Emergency Department of your local hospital if;

- You feel unwell
- You have a high temperature
- Your breast becomes hard, lumpy, sore or red.

Useful contacts:

The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) 24 hour helpline

Ph. 1800 686 268 www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Ballarat Health Service Breastfeeding Clinic

Ph. 53204977 / 53204533

Parent Place Breastfeeding Support (Thursdays)

Cnr Sturt and Albert Streets, Ballarat Central
Ph. 53206871

Ballarat Health Service Maternity Unit

Ph. 53204971

24 Hour Maternal and Child Health Advice Line

Ph. 132229.

