

Breast care when your baby has died

The death of a baby is a difficult time and it is easy to lose yourself in grief. Caring for your breasts at this time is important as it can avoid other possible health complications. This leaflet offers information and practical suggestions.

From about 16 weeks of pregnancy, colostrum (the early or 'first' milk) is produced. Your hormones will cause your breasts to make milk even though you no longer have your baby. Your milk supply may cause a mixed range of emotions. Many women choose to suppress their supply using natural methods. There is also a medication that stops milk production if taken in the first 24 hours after birth. Your doctor can discuss this with you.

KEEPING BREASTS COMFORTABLE

To lessen any breast discomfort as they fill with milk, you might like to try the following:

- Wear a comfortable, supportive bra both day and night. Use breast pads if leaking occurs.
- Avoid excessive heat on your breasts from hot showers, heat packs etc.
- Apply cold relief to your breasts every few hours, e.g. wrapped icy cloths, gel packs, cold cabbage leaves. Gently hand express

THE DAY OF THE FUNERAL

This will be a long and emotional day. You may find the following helpful:

- wear a comfortable bra
- take pain relief as required, according to directions on pack
- express for comfort before the funeral
- take extra breast pads in case of leakage
- dark coloured or patterned tops are less likely to show wet patches
- a cardigan or jacket may also help.

enough milk to relieve any fullness. This does not increase your supply as you are not emptying the breasts. It may be necessary to keep expressing for comfort for several days.

- Any lumps can be relieved by gently massaging the breast towards the nipple while expressing. If not relieved or you become unwell, seek medical advice.
- Take pain relief as required, according to the directions on the pack.

If your milk supply is established:

Your milk production will continue and may take some weeks to stop. During this time, maintain breast comfort using measures already described.

Gradually decrease how often and how much you express while keeping your breasts comfortable. Seek medical advice if you are feeling unwell or notice any tender red lumps that you can't massage out.

Contacts

- Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline Ph: **1800 686 268**, 7 days a week, or visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- SIDSandKIDS 24 hour Bereavement Support Ph: **(02) 9818 8400** or **1800 651 186** if outside the Sydney Metropolitan area.
- NALAG (National Association for Loss and Grief), Ph: **(02) 6882 9222**.