



Memory Milk Gift Scotland

Breast care after loss



If you are reading this leaflet after a miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death, we are so very sorry for your loss. We hope this information will help you make decisions about your care and your breastmilk which are right for you.

This leaflet also has information about organisations or resources that can help you and your family think about options for remembrance and ways to honour your baby, as well as help you find support.

Will my body make breastmilk after my baby has died?

Your body will naturally start making milk around the 16th week of pregnancy. After birth, your hormones change which leads to your breasts making milk.

Some mums and parents find this experience very painful as it reminds them of their loss. They want to stop their milk as quickly as possible. Others find making and expressing their milk comforting.

There is no right or wrong way to feel, or right or wrong decision. This leaflet explains the different options you have. Your healthcare team can support you to make the decision that is best for you and answer any questions you may have.

How do I stop my body from producing milk?

It may take several weeks or more for your breasts to stop making milk. It's important that when your breasts fill with milk, you do not express your milk unless you wish to donate or it's painful. If you don't empty your breasts, your body will stop making milk over the next few days and weeks.

If you have been breastfeeding or expressing milk for your baby, it may take longer to stop producing milk. You will need to reduce your supply slowly to avoid discomfort and to reduce the risk your breasts becoming inflamed.

You can do this by:

- Hand expressing some of your milk to make you feel more comfortable. Your healthcare team can help you work out a schedule to slowly reduce your supply over time. Many hospitals also offer free breast pump borrowing services if this is required.

How do I **express by hand**?

Step 1

Start off by encouraging your milk to flow . To express by hand, start by gently massaging your breast and nipple to stimulate the hormones needed to release milk.



Step 2

Position your thumb and fingers in a 'C' shape, 2 to 3 cm back from the base of your nipple.



Step 3

Gently press and release, press and release, and keep repeating until your milk starts to flow. This may take a few minutes.



Step 4

When the flow slows down, move your fingers round to a different part of your breast and start again.



- Wearing a well-supporting bra, like a sports bra, day and night.
- Sleeping on your back
- Use a cold compress (a damp cloth) for 15-20 minutes. You should avoid using a hot compress.
- Taking paracetamol and ibuprofen

If you experience any pain or are worried that something is wrong, talk to your healthcare team.

Is there any medicine I can take to stop producing milk?

Your healthcare team may offer you a medicine called Cabergoline which has been shown to help stop the body producing milk quickly. How much of this medicine you will need to take, and how often, will depend on how soon after giving birth you start taking it.

Talk to your healthcare team if you would like more information about taking Cabergoline. Like all medicines, there may be side-effects and it may not be suitable for all women.



I want to keep expressing, can I donate my milk?

Some mums and parents find this helps with their grief. However, parental grief is very complex and personal and this may not be a choice for everyone. If you decide you would like to keep expressing, you may want to consider donating your milk.

We can use this:

- To feed babies who are premature or unwell
- For research to help us understand more about breastmilk and its benefits

If you want to donate your milk, talk to your healthcare team and they will answer any questions you have. You can find all the information you need here.



If you want to donate your milk to feed other babies, you will need to complete a screening form and have a blood test. Your healthcare team can tell you how to get them done or may be able to take them for you.

If you don't want to go through screening, or there is a medical reason why your milk cannot be used for other babies, you can donate your milk for research purposes.

What can I do with my stored milk?

There are different options if you have stored milk, and you can decide what is best for you and your family.

You might want to consider:

- Donating your stored milk for other babies or for research
- Keeping a container of milk as a keepsake
- Have your milk turned into a memento, such as a bead or pendant. There are companies who will be able to do this for you (for a fee).

Where can I go for support?

There is a whole community of organisations who are eager to help and support you. Please see below for contact details and please be mindful that there are other organisations



 **Child Bereavement UK**



 **JBCS**



 **Our Sam Baby Loss**



 **Sands**



 **Children of Jannah**



 **Legacy of Leo**
(LGBT resources and experiences)



🌐 National Breastfeeding Helpline



🌐 Vishaal Foundation



🌐 The Neonatal Butterfly Project



🌐 Willow's Rainbow

NHSGGC Donor Milk Bank Contact Details

✉ donor.milkbank@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

☎ 0142 232 7973

🌐 <https://www.nhsggc.scot/hospitals-services/services-a-to-z/milk-bank-scotland/>



