

## Fact Sheet

# Breast care after the loss of your baby

[womensnewbornhealth.com.au](http://womensnewbornhealth.com.au)

The time after the death of a baby can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Time is not a factor in the grieving process. Following the loss of your precious baby feelings of grief and sadness may come and go as you try to move on with life.

Your family and friends will show that they care even though they may not understand exactly how you are feeling.

Colostrum (early breast milk) is produced as early as 16 weeks into the pregnancy. Even when your baby has died, your breasts will still make milk.

Some women welcome this as proof their baby was real while other women find the reminder very painful.

Caring for your breasts is important, as it will help make them comfortable and prevent blocked ducts and mastitis.

### Comfort Measures

- a comfortable and supportive bra
- breast pads if your breasts are leaking
- cold packs on your breasts for 10 to 15 minutes to relieve discomfort. Ensure the cold pack is wrapped in a cloth or piece of material to avoid skin damage. Chilled washers or a bag of frozen peas are examples of cold packs
- avoid heat on your breasts
- pain relief medication may help. Be sure to check with your doctor or pharmacist
- express milk to relieve fullness and until the milk flow stops

### If your milk supply is established

Gradually reduce the number of times you express and the amount of milk removed from your breasts. This will help keep your breasts comfortable.

There is no benefit from limiting how much fluid you drink.

Some mothers may like to freeze a small amount of breast milk as a memento. It may take some weeks (or even longer) for your milk to disappear completely. If you are unsure, talk with your midwife or doctor.

### Things to watch for

#### Engorgement

This is when your breasts become swollen, hard and painful. If you have been expressing / feeding your baby and your breasts are full, express your breasts completely once to relieve the pain. Then follow comfort measures.

#### Mastitis

This is an infection in the breast. Women with Mastitis often experience breast discomfort and a 'red' and swollen area on the breast. The red area on the breast may feel hard and lumpy as well.

#### Symptoms of Mastitis include:

- red, painful and sometimes a 'hot' area on your breast
- feeling 'unwell' and having flu like symptoms
- feeling shaky.

[You can read our Mastitis factsheet on our Breastfeeding page.](#)

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### The day of your baby's funeral

- express milk for comfort before the funeral and throughout the day as needed
- your breasts may leak milk, so be prepared with breast pads
- ensure your bra is firm but not tight
- dark coloured or patterned tops are less likely to show wet patches. A cardigan or jacket may help as well
- breast pain may be relieved by pain medication taken as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.



You can seek support from many places, including our 'Losing your Baby' information page <http://www.wslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/WNH/Health-Information/Losing-your-baby>

**Remember: keeping your breasts comfortable does not increase your milk supply because you are not emptying the breasts.**

### Dostinex® (cabergoline)

Dostinex comes in 1mg tablets and are taken **ONCE** as soon as possible after the birth.

### Common Side Effects

It is important that you do not drive a vehicle or operate machinery for at least 6 or more hours after taking Dostinex.

### Other side effects include:

- dizziness due to low blood pressure
- headache
- nausea
- tiredness / sleepiness
- abdominal pain

### Rare side effects:

- irregular heart beat
- heartburn
- nose-bleed
- temporary impairment of vision
- vomiting
- fainting
- weakness
- hot flushes

**We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.**

### Send your feedback to:

WSLHD-Get\_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au