

Fact Sheet

Medication to dry up your milk – lactation suppression

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Women sometimes ask for a tablet to stop their milk supply. This medication works best if it is taken within 12- 24 hours of your baby's birth. The medication is not routinely prescribed in hospital due to the many side effects and health risks with this medication.

The medication is called **cabergoline** (Dostinex®). This fact sheet only relates to preventing breast engorgement before breast feeding has started. Stopping breast feeding after it has begun often needs a different approach - if you are in that situation, then you should talk to your midwife or doctor.

While cabergoline as a single dose appears to be very safe, it can cause mild side-effects in 20% of women and more moderate ones in 5%. Some women therefore prefer non-medication means to try and control breast-milk engorgement, including expressing milk from the breasts to the point of comfort. For many women with late pregnancy loss however, cabergoline is the best option.

If your doctor has prescribed cabergoline, please read the following instructions carefully:

- Cabergoline 1mg (2 tablets) is taken with food.
- You should not drive or operate machinery for six hours after taking the medication as it can cause dizziness due to a drop in your blood pressure.
- Your fertility will return quickly after taking cabergoline, within a few weeks, so you need to think about contraception right away unless you wish to get pregnant again very soon

Some women shouldn't take cabergoline

Cabergoline is not recommended to stop your milk supply if you:

- have a reaction to medications used to slow down excessive bleeding after birth (ergot medications)
- have uncontrolled / severe high blood pressure (BP) with systolic BP 150 mmHg or higher and/or diastolic BP 100 mmHg or higher
- have heart disease including angina (chest pain when exercising) or a previous heart attack
- have a condition which affects your circulation such as Raynaud's syndrome or long-standing diabetes which has affected your blood vessels
- have a problem with fibrosis (constriction) around your heart or lungs
- are currently breastfeeding.

Cabergoline is most effective if taken in the first 12 to 24 hours following birth – the earlier it is taken the better it will work

Some women should be careful with cabergoline

You should be careful taking cabergoline if you have:

- very low blood pressure
 - for example: systolic BP 85 mmHg or lower or diastolic BP 40 mmHg or lower
 - cabergoline can generally be taken with blood pressure medication as long as your BP is above these levels
- severe liver disease (not usually a problem with a single dose)

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Some medications can interact with cabergoline

Cabergoline should be delayed for 4 hours after administration of the following medications:

- syntometrine / ergometrine
- metoclopramide (Maxolon), prochlorperazine (Stemetil) or promethazine (Phenergan)
- erythromycin (a type of antibiotic) – or drugs from the same family of antibiotics

Side Effects after taking cabergoline

After taking cabergoline most women (75%) will have no side effects while 20% will have mild side-effects and 5% will have more moderate side-effects.

Side-effects can include:

- dizziness or faintness related to temporary lowering of blood pressure
- tiredness or weakness
- headache
- feeling sick on the stomach (nausea) – reduced by taking the medication with food
- constipation
- stomach pain
- rarely feeling your heart is racing, hot flushes, a nose-bleed, vomiting or having a problem with your eyesight.

Cabergoline is a safe medication and most women have no side effects or mild side effects. If you have any concerns after taking cabergoline speak to your doctor or midwife.

Needing a second dose of cabergoline

Most women will have good result in drying up their milk after one dose of cabergoline taken early.

However, a small number may need a second dose

- 5% may need a second dose on Day 4 (the usual day the breasts become very engorged) because the medication hasn't worked well
- 5% may need a second dose on Day 7 because the medication worked well in the beginning but the effect is wearing off early
- If you think you may need a second dose you should **contact your midwife or doctor** to discuss it.

Bromocriptine (Parlodel)

This is an old-fashioned medication for drying up the milk which is longer used, because it is not as safe as cabergoline and doesn't work as well. It should not be used.

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

Send your feedback to:

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