

# Breastmilk Suppression (stopping breastfeeding)



## Breastmilk suppression

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

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).

### Suppressing in the first few days 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:

- Wear a firm but not tight bra or crop top day and night until your breasts feel less full.
- If your breasts feel full and painful you can hand express a small amount of milk for comfort. However you should try to avoid stimulating milk production through too much expressing. Ask your midwife to show you how to hand express if you have not done this before.
- Gently massage your breasts under the shower allowing some of the milk to leak.
- Milk leakage may occur and you may need to wear breast pads.
- Covered cold packs, paracetamol or ibuprofen may help to relieve pain.

### If you have been breastfeeding for some time:

- Suppression should be done 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 less full.
- Gently massage your breasts under the shower allowing some of the milk to leak.
- Covered cold packs, paracetamol or ibuprofen may help to relieve pain.



## 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.

### 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.**

## Switching to bottle feeding

You will need to purchase a formula suitable for your baby's age and follow the instructions for preparing and storing the formula on the tin.

More information about feeding your baby with formula is available from your midwife or Maternal and Child Health Nurse.

### Author

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## 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

## Useful contacts:

### The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) 24 hour helpline

Ph. 1800 686 268  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

### Ballarat Health Service Breastfeeding Clinic

Ph. 53204977 / 53204533

### Parent Place Breastfeeding Support

Cnr Sturt and Albert Streets, Ballarat Central  
Ph. 53204977 / 53206871  
or drop in Thursdays 1300-1500

### Ballarat Health Service Maternity Unit

Ph. 53204971

### 24 Hour Maternal and Child Health Advice Line Ph. 132229.

