

## Patient information factsheet

# Suppressing your breast milk supply after giving birth

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about lactation suppression (the process of drying up breast milk). It explains what lactation suppression involves and includes some helpful tips on coping with the side effects. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife or our bereavement team.

### Lactation suppression

To prevent your body naturally producing breast milk after the birth of your baby, we can prescribe you a drug called Cabergoline. Cabergoline works by stopping your body's production of prolactin (a hormone that the body releases to help maintain the milk supply). It comes in the form of a tablet that you take by mouth. Most women only need one dose of the medication before their milk supply dries up. However, other women may need additional doses. If this is the case, your obstetrician or GP will be able to prescribe this for you.

### Breast engorgement

Breast engorgement is the term used to describe an increase in the volume of milk within your breasts, which together with an increased blood supply to your breasts, can cause your breasts to feel warm, heavy and tender. Breast engorgement often occurs around three to four days after giving birth and can last about 48 hours. If your breasts do become engorged, they may feel hard, tight and painful.

### Minimising discomfort

We have included some tips below to help minimise any discomfort you may experience when drying up your milk supply.

### Cold compresses

Cold compresses, such as cooling gel breast pads, can be placed in your bra to help relieve symptoms of breast engorgement.

Cooled cabbage leaves can also ease the discomfort of engorgement. If you choose to use cabbage leaves, please follow the instructions below:

1. Remove cabbage leaves from the core and discard any large cabbage veins.
2. Wash and dry the leaves thoroughly and place in the fridge to cool.
3. Place enough leaves over your breast to cover the swollen area and replace every 20 to 30 minutes when the leaves begin to wilt.
4. Repeat as necessary.

Do not place cabbage leaves on broken or damaged skin.

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## **Wear a good-fitting bra**

Make sure your bra fits properly. A good-fitting bra can help to support your breasts and make you feel more comfortable.

## **Pain-relief medications**

You may take over-the-counter pain relief medications, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen tablets, to relieve pain and inflammation. Do not take more than instructed.

## **Expressing**

If you are extremely uncomfortable, please contact your midwife or our bereavement team for advice. They may recommend expressing a tiny amount of milk from your breasts to relieve some of the pain and pressure. However, expressing is not usually advised, as the more milk you remove, the more milk you are likely to make, which can cause additional problems.

## **Contact us**

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us.

### **Bereavement team**

Telephone: **07392 128352**

Email: **bereavementteam@uhs.nhs.uk**

### **Maternity day assessment unit (at Princess Anne Hospital, D level)**

Telephone: **023 8120 4463**

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