Breast Care Following the Loss of your Baby

One of the most distressing physical symptoms following the death of your baby can be breast pain and the production of breast milk.

Reducing Your Milk Supply

You may have been expressing breast milk before the death of your baby. It is painful to suddenly stop pumping and could cause a blocked duct or infection.

Try the following regime:

**Day 1**: Pump each breast for 5 minutes every 4-5 hours.

**Day 2**: Pump each breast for 3-5 minutes every 6 hours.

**Day 3-7**: Pump each breast just long enough to relieve discomfort.

You may experience a small leakage of milk from the breasts up to a few weeks following the loss of your baby. This is normal and will eventually stop.

Milk Donation

You may wish to donate your breast milk to a milk bank. Milk banks provide donated breast milk to sick and premature babies.

The nearest milk bank is the Enniskillen Milk Bank in Northern Ireland. They organise the collection and delivery of breast milk.

Their number is (048) 6862 8333

Denise Mc Guinness - Clinical Midwife Specialist (Lactation) 01-6373251

Dr Barbara Coughlan, Lecturer, UCD.

Sheila Power - Clinical Midwife Specialist (Bereavement) 01-6373225

Kim Ryan - Student Midwife
Engorgement

Breasts may become engorged (swollen and tender and hard) between two and five days after giving birth to your baby. Breasts may feel uncomfortable and leak some milk for up to 7-14 days.

“...the pain was just painful and the fullness was just uncomfortable but I found the fact that it started to leak was emotionally very difficult.”
Cait

Coping with engorgement

You can relieve symptoms of engorgement by:

- taking regular pain relief,
- wearing a support bra all the time,
- using breast pads to absorb leaking milk,
- using cold compresses on your breasts,
- applying washed and chilled cabbage leaves to the breast (but changing them frequently),
- having a warm shower but try to avoid the shower jets directly on your breasts, and
- sleeping in a semi upright position to ease the pressure from heavy breasts.

Hand expression video clip
www.nmh.ie/bereavement

Other helpful suggestions

If your breasts feel very full, express a little milk for comfort before you go out.

Wear breast pads in the bra to absorb leaking milk. Wear a patterned top or blouse to camouflage any leaking milk.

At the funeral, if standing, place one arm across the breasts to protect sore breasts when hugging. Offer the other arm. Where possible, sit down while hugging as there is less pressure on the breasts.