

Patient Education

Lactation Services



Breastfeeding for the Mother Having Surgery

Breastfeeding can continue even if you need to have an operation. Here are some things to think about as you plan to keep breastfeeding as much as possible.

Planning Ahead

- Tell your doctor and other health care providers that you plan to keep breastfeeding your baby around the time of your surgery and afterward.
- Find out how long your procedure or surgery will take.
- Ask your doctor how long your recovery time will be and how you will manage your pain after your surgery. The length of your surgery and recovery time could mean you will miss 1 or more of your baby's feedings.
- Ask your doctor what movement restrictions you may have after your surgery.
- If you have special concerns about breastfeeding, please talk with a lactation consultant at 206-598-4628.
- Make sure your family and friends know that you will keep breastfeeding after your surgery. Ask them to help with baby care during your recovery at the hospital and when you go home.

At University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC), we encourage you to have your baby stay in your room with you and be there with you as much as possible. **But, you will need another adult to care for your baby in your room.** You need to be free to recover and rest without being responsible for baby care.

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Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Lactation Services:
206-598-4628

Weekdays:
9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

After hours and on weekends and holidays:
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Before your surgery, pump enough breast milk for at least 1 or 2 feedings. You may not need to use this milk, but you will probably feel better knowing it is there if you do need it.

For most women, the best time to pump extra milk is right after breastfeeding. You may want to do 1 or 2 pumping sessions for a few days to collect enough milk.

Store your pumped breast milk in the refrigerator or freezer for the day of your surgery. You can store it for up to 8 days in the refrigerator and up to 6 months in a freezer that is cold enough to freeze ice cream solid.

If you are concerned about whether your baby will take a bottle, call a lactation consultant at 206-598-4628.

Anesthesia and Medicines

Breastfeeding mothers may be concerned about the medicines they may be given before, during, and after surgery. Some drug manufacturers say to throw away your breast milk for 24 hours after surgery. But, very little of these medicines enters your milk, and even less is absorbed by your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics approves many of the medicines that are normally used with surgery for breastfeeding mothers. Most times, you will not need to pump and throw away any of your milk.

The Day of Surgery

Plan on feeding your baby or pumping your breasts as close to the time of surgery as possible. This will help keep your breasts from becoming too full during surgery.

You will also need to empty your breasts after your surgery. We encourage you to breastfeed at this time rather than use a pump. If you cannot breastfeed after your surgery, plan on using an electric pump for 10 to 15 minutes at normal feeding times until you can feed your baby again. While you are in the hospital, your nurse can order a double electric pump for you to use before or after your surgery. It can be ready within about an hour's notice. Or, you can bring your own pump from home, if you have one.

If you have any questions or concerns about breastfeeding or pumping after surgery, you or your nurse can call a lactation consultant at 206-598-4628.

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