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Postpartum Breast Care When You Don't Plan to Breastfeed

This handout provides information and steps to follow for birthing parents who are not planning to breastfeed.

Your breasts will start to make milk in the first couple of days after you give birth. This happens even if you don't breastfeed. You may have some milk leak from your breasts, and your breasts may feel *engorged* (sore and swollen). This usually gets better after several days.

Your body will stop making milk if you don't breastfeed or pump. This may take several weeks.

Self-care at home

You can take steps at home to decrease your discomfort and help your breasts stop making milk.

- **Do not** pump or remove milk from your breasts by hand.
- Wear a bra that fits well and provides good support. You may find it helpful to wear a bra even while you sleep.
- If you are having discomfort, apply a cold pack to your breasts for 15 minutes every hour. You can use a frozen wet towel, a cold pack, or a bag of frozen vegetables. To prevent damage to your skin, put a thin cloth between the cold pack and your skin. Cool green cabbage leaves on your breasts also work well. You can replace them every 4-8 hours with fresh chilled leaves.
- Ask your doctor if you can take ibuprofen (such as Advil or Motrin) to reduce pain and swelling. Follow all instructions on the label.
- You can try adding foods to your diet that reduce milk production. These include parsley, mint, and sage.

When to Call

Call us right away or go to the nearest emergency department if you have symptoms of a breast infection, such as:

- Increased pain, swelling, redness, or warmth around your breast.
- Red streaks leading from your breast.
- Pus draining from your breast.
- A fever or other flu-like symptoms.



Let your doctor know if you have any questions or concerns about your breast health or comfort after birth.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

**UWMC Northwest
Childbirth Center:**
206.368.1596