

Cherry Blossom Family Program

The Cherry Blossom Program was created to support bereaved families after perinatal loss by empowering families with information and tools to help with lactation choices. We extend our heartfelt condolences to you and your family and offer our support during this most difficult time. We honor you as parents and your baby's life and time on earth with dignity.

Why Am I Still Producing Milk?

Milk production can start as early as the 4th month of pregnancy. From that point forward, it is normal to produce milk, even without stimulation. You may leak milk or experience full breasts.

What Are My Options?

One option is to comfortably stop your milk production. Another is to express your milk and possibly donate to help fragile and premature infants. There is no right or wrong decision. The best option is the one that feels right for you during your journey through grief and healing.

I Want To Stop My Milk

Without stimulation (e.g., no pumping or hand expression), your milk will soon dry up. To slow your milk production and be more comfortable until milk production is fully suppressed, you can do the following:

- Express a small amount of milk by hand or pump every few hours to ease breast fullness and prevent blocked milk ducts. Gradually (over the next few days/weeks), decrease the number of times a day you express milk.
- Hot showers can cause your breasts to release a small amount of milk and make you more comfortable. Cold compresses placed in a supportive bra can help relieve swelling and pain. Wearing nursing pads can prevent leaking through your clothing.
- Take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication, like ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) to help with pain relief. Prescription medication to stop milk production can be taken, but should first be discussed with your provider to make sure it is safe for you.

If you have full breasts (engorgement) or develop blocked ducts with fever, body aches, chills, and/or red painful areas on your breast (mastitis), you may have an infection and should call your doctor.

Binding your breasts or wearing tight clothing is not recommended and can cause harm. Be patient with your body and yourself; milk suppression can take some time. If you need additional support, please reach out to your health care providers, family, friends, or community resources.



Please visit our website or call for more information
ucmilkbank@health.ucsd.edu | ucmilkbank.ucsd.edu | 858-249- MILK (6455)

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I Want To Express My Milk

Milk expression can be comforting and healing. With stimulation (e.g., pumping or hand expression), you can build and maintain your milk production by doing the following:

- Regular expression of milk (pumping) about every 4 hours, or 6 times a day, for about 10-20 minutes per breast will build up and maintain milk supply.
- If you already have a steady milk supply, you can continue pumping as much as you like. The right time to stop is your choice and depends on what feels good and right to you.

For questions about milk expression, contact your healthcare provider or lactation consultant.

Breast milk Donation

Donating milk to a non-profit milk bank is a beautiful gift that can help nourish and protect medically-fragile infants. For some, milk donation is a way to honor one's own baby by saving the life of another.

If you are interested in donating your precious milk, please reach out and we will guide you through the process. Contact us at 858-249-MILK (6455) or online at ucmilkbank.ucsd.edu.

Cherry Blossom Memorial Mural

Our Cherry Blossom Memorial Wall was created as a way to honor your baby (regardless of donation). If you would like us to inscribe your baby's name on a ceramic blossom to be placed on our memorial wall, please contact us and we would be honored to do so.

"My son Theo was born prematurely at 23 weeks and during his short NICU stay, it was my hope for him to be able to taste my breastmilk. Sadly, he passed away shortly but I wanted to honor Theo by pumping and donating my breastmilk to all the other NICU babies who are still fighting. I was able to pump and donate for 4 months, which helped tremendously in my journey through grief as it was my physical connection to being a mother, and it allowed Theo and I to save lives."

- Diep Ho, bereaved mother and Cherry Blossom donor

For Additional Bereavement Support

- Facebook online groups – connect with thousands of women going through similar loss experiences
- Postpartum Health Alliance - <https://postpartumhealthalliance.org/>
- La Leche League Lactation after Loss- <https://llusa.org/lactation-after-loss/>
- Isabella's Giraffe Club Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support - <https://isabellasgiraffeclub.org/services/>
- Empty Cradle - <https://www.emptycradle.org/>
- Sad Dads Club - <https://saddadsclub.com/>
- Institute of Reproductive Grief Care - <https://reproductivegrief.org/helpful-toolkits/>



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Last reviewed by Alison Wolf CPNP, IBCLC on 02/10/2024

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