

Breastfeeding If You Have Had Breast Surgery

Many mothers who have had breast surgery can provide enough breastmilk for their baby. In some types of breast surgery several milk ducts and nerves are cut. When this happens, your milk supply may be reduced. You can still breastfeed your baby, but you may need to supplement. Any breastmilk you can give your baby is important because of the special qualities in human milk.

Before You Give Birth

- Discuss the details of your surgery with your health care provider. They will help you set goals for your breastfeeding experience.
- Try to learn as much as you can about breastfeeding before your baby arrives. Ask your health care provider about attending prenatal breastfeeding classes.

After The Birth of Your Baby

Some suggestions while in the hospital:

- Breastfeed your baby as soon as possible after birth.
- Hold your baby skin-to-skin.
- Watch for your baby's feeding cues.
- Breastfeed your baby 8 or more times in 24 hours. You may need to waken your baby to feed.
- Use breast compression and massage during the feeding to help your baby get more milk.
- Use switch nursing when you feed your baby.
Switch Nursing: Breastfeed your baby on one breast until swallowing slows or stops. Move your baby to the other breast and breastfeed until swallowing slows or stops. Return to the first breast and repeat the above steps.
- Remove milk from your breasts by hand expression and/or pumping. Using a double hospital grade electric breast pump will save you time, give more stimulation to your breasts and may help to increase your milk supply. Talk to your nurse or Lactation Consultant about how often to hand express/pump.

Some suggestions when you go home:

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin and watch for feeding cues.
- Breastfeed your baby 8 or more times in 24 hours.
- Continue to use breast compression and massage during the feeding.
- Continue with switch nursing.
- Continue to remove milk from your breasts by hand expression and/or pumping.
- Keep a record of the number of times your baby feeds, wets and has bowel movements. Show this record to your health care provider.
- Be sure to have your baby's growth, including weight checked weekly or as often as directed by your health care provider.

NB: Mothers who have had breast surgery may have engorged areas in the breast that do not soften after baby breastfeeds. This happens because milk cannot flow through ducts which have been damaged.

It may take several days for the firm areas to soften. Apply ice packs for 10 - 15 minutes between feeds to help reduce the swelling and discomfort. Many mothers have found that taking an over-the-counter medication to relieve pain can be helpful.

Talk to your health care provider about the need for a supplement if your baby is:

- Never satisfied after breastfeeding.
- Not wetting enough or having enough bowel movements.
- Sleepy most of the time and does not waken within 3 hours for feeds.
- Losing or not gaining weight appropriately.

Supplement your baby with:

- Your fresh pumped breastmilk.
- Your refrigerated or frozen breastmilk if fresh breastmilk is not available.
- Donor breastmilk from a Human Milk Bank if your baby qualifies.
- Commercial infant formula.

Talk to your health care provider about the various ways you can give your baby the supplement. They can give you the information that you need to decide what is best for you and your baby.

If you think that you are not making enough breastmilk or that your baby is not getting enough breastmilk, talk to your health care provider **right away**. They can help you find the best feeding plan for you and your baby.

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