



Breastfeeding Your Baby

How to care for leaking breasts

Why are my breasts leaking milk?

Some nursing mothers experience milk leaking from their breasts between feedings. This can happen when your nipples rub against a bed sheet, bath towel, or clothing, or when you hear a baby cry.

This is a normal sign of a let-down reflex (a strong flow of milk). It usually happens during the first few weeks of nursing as your body adjusts to producing just the right amount of milk for your baby. Going too long without nursing or pumping (more than three hours) can also cause leaking. Once you begin to recognize when your baby wants to eat, your breasts shouldn't leak as often.

If you are changing your nursing schedule from nursing on demand to nursing less often, you should expect a certain amount of leaking during this period. Leaking may also occur when you stop breastfeeding or when you combine breastfeeding with feeding formula from a bottle. It will probably continue until your body has adjusted to the new schedule.

What can I do about leaking breast milk?

There are ways to manage leaking breast milk. Here are some suggestions:

- Try to stop the flow of milk by folding your arms across your breasts and pressing gently. It is best to wait and try this after your baby is three weeks old.
- Use disposable or cotton breast pads in your bra to absorb leaking milk. Make sure that the pads don't have a plastic liner. Be sure to change the wet pads frequently.
- Avoid pumping your breasts to control leaking. This can encourage your body to make more milk, and in turn, cause even more leaking.

If you are concerned about leaking milk, call your lactation consultant.



Other resources:

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org/mydoctor to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Visit the La Leche League International Web site: lli.org or call the 24-hour Breastfeeding Helpline: 877-4-LALECHE
- Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.