



# Breast milk donation after baby loss

## Your choices and options

This leaflet contains information about your lactation choices:

- Allowing lactation to start or continue
- Deciding what to do with any milk you produce

**If you are reading this leaflet after the loss of your baby, we are sorry for your loss and we hope that this leaflet helps you to make some decisions.**

### What is lactation?

- Lactation is the process of producing and releasing milk from the mammary glands in the breasts.
- A woman's body normally starts to make milk at around 16 weeks of pregnancy, although this can sometimes be earlier depending on your history.
- High hormone levels prevent full lactation until after the birth when hormone changes lead to full breast milk production.
- Colostrum is the first form of breastmilk that is released by the mammary glands. Colostrum changes to mature milk 3-5 days after the birth. Breastmilk is then produced in response to demand.
- Some parents find comfort in their body making milk when their baby dies as an ongoing connection with their baby.
- This leaflet details the options that you have that will help you to make an informed choice that is right for you and your family. Try to remember there is no right or wrong decision in this situation.

### Breast milk options

#### What if I want to continue my milk supply?

- You may want to express and create a short- or long-term milk supply which may provide comfort for you at this difficult time. It can also have positive health effects for you. Grief is very complex and personal, and this may not be the choice of everyone.



- With our support you can express your milk by hand or pump for as long as you wish. This can be as much as you feel able to do.
- If you wish to establish a supply, for example if you wished to donate your milk to other babies, this would require expressing approximately 8 times a day or every 3-4 hours.
- Any milk is best stored frozen until you are ready to decide what you want to do with this milk.

### Making milk memories

- You may wish to keep a container of milk as a keepsake.
- Some of this breast milk can be used as a memory of your baby. There are many online companies that can turn breastmilk into jewellery for a fee.

### Breast milk donation through a milk bank

- You might also consider donating expressed breast milk either to help premature babies, older babies or for research.
- This can be done via a milk bank.
- This can be a one-off donation of a supply you already have or hope to express, or you may want to continue donating over time.
- Staff at Hearts Milk Bank, which is local to the Whittington, will be able to talk you through the process of donating and answer any of your questions. Please visit <https://humanmilkfoundation.org/hearts-milk-bank/>
- Donations may be anonymous or in the memory of your baby.
- At the Hearts Milk Bank, mothers who donate after bereavement can become Snowdrop Donors. Snowdrops are planted to remember each baby, in tribute to each baby and to recognise the precious gift of milk.
- For further information visit <https://ukamb.org/> . You can also find a list of other milk banks in the UK here - [www.ukamb.org/milk-banks](http://www.ukamb.org/milk-banks).
- There are a few exclusions to donating breast milk which may include:
  - Smoking or use of nicotine replacement
  - Some medications



- If this happens then it might be possible for your milk to be used in other ways, such as for older infants, or for research. You can contact Hearts Milk Bank directly or ask the Bereavement Support Midwives to get in touch first to work out what is possible for your milk.

## Experiences of mothers who have donated

"When mothers lose a baby, they are in so much pain, it can't really get any worse and allowing their bodies to go through the natural process of lactation may actually help. It certainly has for me" **Snowdrop donor**

"To see Robin's milk going off with the wonderful courier David earlier this week brought me so much joy. I've had a spring in my step ever since" **Snowdrop donor**

## Video testimonials

**Holly and Bodhi's story**



**Abi and Oliver's story**



## Whittington Maternity contact information

- **Whittington Bereavement Midwifery Team**  
Jane Laking, Debra Virchis, Katie Courtney  
Shared phone: 07825 00 9071 (operational 8am-4pm, 7 days a week)  
Email: [whh-tr.bereavementmidwife@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.bereavementmidwife@nhs.net)
- **Early Pregnancy Unit** – 020 7288 3786 (If the pregnancy was below 18 weeks)
- **Maternity Triage** – 020 7288 5880 (If the pregnancy was 18 weeks or over)
- **Labour Ward** - 020 7288 5502
- **Fetal Medicine Unit** - 020 7288 5588
- **Department of Spiritual and Pastoral Care** - 020 7288 5337



## Where can I go for support?

There are many organisations that can offer help and support, and it is important that you find the right one for you. The Bereavement Support Midwives at the Whittington will discuss the support that is right for you after you are discharged from hospital. Other organisations you may wish to contact are:

	Contact Number	Website
<b>ARC</b>	020 7713 7486	<a href="http://www.arc-uk.org">www.arc-uk.org</a>
<b>Chana</b>	020 8201 5774 020 8800 0018	<a href="http://www.chana.org.uk">www.chana.org.uk</a>
<b>Little Fingers</b>		<a href="http://www.littlefingers.org.uk">www.littlefingers.org.uk</a>
<b>MIND</b>	020 8519 2122	<a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a>
<b>Miscarriage Association</b>	01924 200 799	<a href="http://miscarriageassociation.org.uk">miscarriageassociation.org.uk</a>
<b>Muslim Bereavement Support Service</b>	020 3468 7333	<a href="http://www.mbss.org.uk">www.mbss.org.uk</a>
<b>Samaritans</b>	116 123	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>
<b>Saying Goodbye UK</b>	0845 293 8027	<a href="http://www.sayinggoodbye.org">www.sayinggoodbye.org</a>
<b>SANDS</b> (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society)  Local North-East London group	020 7436 5881	<a href="http://www.sands.org.uk">www.sands.org.uk</a>  f North and East London Sands inelondonsands support.northeastlondon.org.uk
<b>SANDS United</b> (Support for Fathers)		f SandsUtdLondon <a href="http://www.sands.org.uk/sands-united">www.sands.org.uk/sands-united</a>



### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth

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