

Breastfeeding after Surgery

Information for Patients



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After anesthesia and surgery, your mental and physical functions may be disturbed for several hours.

You do not need to interrupt your breastfeeding routine, as there is minimal transfer of anesthetic drugs into your breast milk. However, if you are concerned about the possibility of mild sedation to your baby, you can pump and discard your breast milk for the first day after surgery.

Stress and pain can hold back the flow of milk (letdown) in some mothers so medication for pain relief is important. However, some stronger pain killers **do** cross over into breast milk. This may cause your baby to become sleepy. You can check with your surgeon before you leave the hospital.

You will need to rest until you feel fully recovered from the anesthetic. The time needed may vary depending on the length and type of your surgery.

Safety of your baby is important. You may be slightly unsteady on your feet for the first day or so. We recommend that someone bring your baby to you for feeds until you feel strong enough to carry the baby yourself. Be careful not to fall asleep while breastfeeding your baby today, as you may be drowsy from the anesthetic. If you are drowsy, you should not be feeding your baby alone.

While feeding, stay comfortable with good support especially if you have incisions on your abdomen. A pillow on your lap to take the weight of the baby may be helpful. Lying on your side in bed may be more comfortable for the first day or two so you can rest and nurse your baby at the same time.

Surgery can lead to the body being dehydrated so you should drink more fluids to help maintain your milk production. More frequent feedings will also stimulate milk production.

Do not skip or delay feeds as this may cause overly full breasts at first, then a reduced milk supply. If your baby is not feeding at the breast, pumping or hand expression is necessary to maintain supply and to prevent painful swelling or mastitis (breast inflammation). Pumping your milk will also allow someone else to feed your baby, therefore allowing you time to sleep.

You may need help for baby care other than feeding, including household duties and care of other children.