

Is it safe to breast/chest feed after surgery?

Yes, it is safe to breast/chest feed after surgery. You do not need to change your baby's feeding routine. Only a tiny amount of pain medication from the surgery goes into your milk. This is safe for your baby. However, this tiny amount can make your baby a little sleepier than usual. If you want, you can pump and discard your milk for the first day after surgery.

It is important to take pain medication if you need it. Untreated pain can slow your recovery and reduce milk production.

Some stronger prescription pain medications (like opioids or narcotics) can transfer into breast milk. If you have prescription pain medication, tell your surgeon or nurse you are breast/chest feeding before you leave the hospital. Ask your pharmacist if you have more questions.

Preparing for surgery

Tell your surgeon and anesthesiologist that you are breast/chest feeding so they can avoid giving you medications that travel to the breastmilk.

Breast pumps are available for use in the pre-surgical area. Ask your nurse to use one if you need it.

If you have time to prepare before surgery, you can:

- Express after feeding and freeze your milk. You can use this milk while you are away from your baby and after surgery.

- Ask a friend or relative to:
 - Care for your baby during surgery
 - Care for your baby after surgery, until you are ready
 - Help you feed your baby
 - Help with baby care
 - Do chores like cooking, cleaning and laundry
 - Care for your other children

After surgery

- When you leave the hospital, you may feel unsteady. If you can, ask someone to bring your baby to you for feeds until you are strong enough to carry your baby.
- Stay comfortable when your baby feeds. This is very important if you have incisions on your abdomen.
 - You can use a pillow on your lap to support your baby's weight.
 - It may be more comfortable to lie on your side in bed when you breast/chest feed. You must stay awake when breast/chest feeding. If you feel drowsy, ask another adult to stay with you.
- Surgery can cause dehydration. Drink lots of fluids to help maintain your milk supply.
- Feed your baby often. Do not skip or delay feeds. This can cause overly full breasts, and lower milk supply.
- If your baby does not breast/chest feed, use a pump or hand expression. This can prevent painful swelling and mastitis (inflammation). You can also pump your milk so that someone else can feed your baby. This will allow you time to sleep.