



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Getting Ready for Your Surgery or Procedure While You're Breastfeeding or Lactating

This information will help you get ready for your surgery or procedure at MSK while you're breastfeeding or lactating (when your body makes milk).

## What to Do Before Your Surgery or Procedure

### Ask about your medications

- Talk with your care team about the different types of medication you will get before, during, and after your surgery or procedure. By talking with them ahead of time, they can support you throughout your care.
- Let your child's doctor know that you'll be having a surgery or procedure. Tell them you may need anesthesia (medication to make you sleep) or other medications.

If you have questions about any of the medications you'll get, here are some resources that can help:

- **Infant Risk Center**

[www.infantrisk.com](http://www.infantrisk.com)

806-352-2519

Infant Risk Center offers information about taking medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

- **LactMed Drug and Lactation Database**

LactMed provides information about medication and other chemicals that can be passed on to your baby from breast milk.

## **Talk with a lactation consultant**

You may want to talk with an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). A lactation consultant is a health professional who helps breastfeeding or lactating parents. They can support you around the time of your surgery or procedure.

## **Pump and store your breast milk**

- If possible, pump or express (squeeze milk from your breast) your milk. Store a supply of your breast milk before your surgery or procedure. This will help make sure your baby drinks your breast milk even when you are not together.
- Plan ahead if you expect to stay in the hospital for more than 24 hours (1 day). Have a family member or friend bring your pumped or expressed breast milk home each day.
  - Your breast milk can be stored in an insulated cooler bag with ice packs for 24 hours. Keep the ice packs in on the milk containers at all times. Open the cooler bag as little as possible to help the milk stay cold.
  - Once your breast milk is brought home, it should be used right away, stored in the refrigerator, or frozen.
  - If you cannot send your milk home each day, you can store it at one of these MSK locations:
    - Memorial Hospital (MSK's main hospital)  
1275 York Ave. (between East 67<sup>th</sup> and East 68<sup>th</sup> streets)  
New York, NY 10065
    - David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care

530 E. 74<sup>th</sup> St.  
New York, NY 10021

- Josie Robertson Surgery Center  
1133 York Ave.  
New York, NY 10065

Breast milk can be stored on site for up to 3 days. Breast milk cannot be stored on site for longer than 3 days. If you're in the hospital for longer than 3 days, have a friend or family member take it home.

For more information about how to safely store your breast milk, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm)

## **What to Do on the Day of Your Surgery or Procedure**

Plan to breastfeed, pump, or express right before your surgery or procedure. This will help you keep your milk supply. It also will prevent pain and breast engorgement (when your breasts overflow with milk and become firm and swollen).

### **What to bring to your surgery or procedure**

- Your own breast pump with its power source.
- All the supplies you need for milk expression (removing milk from your breasts).
- Milk storage containers.
- A cooler bag with ice packs to store your pumped breast milk.

A technician will check your breast pump for safety. This is usually done at your bedside. Sometimes, the technician may need to take the pump away for a moment to check it.

If your personal breast pump stops working or fails the inspection, we have some breast pumps you can use. You can get them at these MSK locations:

- Memorial Hospital (MSK's main hospital)  
1275 York Ave. (between East 67<sup>th</sup> and East 68<sup>th</sup> streets)  
New York, NY 10065
- David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care  
530 E. 74<sup>th</sup> St.  
New York, NY 10021
- Josie Robertson Surgery Center  
1133 York Ave.  
New York, NY 10065

### **Talk with your care team**

Tell your care team you're breastfeeding or lactating and want to continue after your surgery or procedure.

### **What to Do After Your Surgery or Procedure**

Anesthesia doesn't stay in your body for very long. If you have questions about the anesthesia you got, talk with your anesthesiologist (the doctor who gives you anesthesia).

You should plan to start pumping again as soon as you're awake and able. If you need help, ask a member of your care team. You may also want to ask your family or friends for help as you recover from your surgery or procedure.

Plan to pump or express every 3 to 4 hours, or at least as often as your baby feeds. Pumping often will help you keep your milk supply until you're with your baby and able to breastfeed again.

If you have questions about the medications you'll get after your

surgery or procedure, talk with your healthcare provider. You can also check the websites or call the number listed under the “What to Do Before Your Surgery or Procedure” section.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Proper Handling and Storage of Human Milk

[www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling\\_breastmilk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm)

This resource has information about how to safely prepare and store breast milk.

### **Breastfeeding USA**

[www.breastfeedingusa.org](http://www.breastfeedingusa.org)

This resource has information and support for breastfeeding.

### **International Lactation Consultant Association**

[www.ilca.org](http://www.ilca.org)

888-452-2478

You can find an IBCLC near you by searching under the “Find an IBCLC” section.

### **United States Lactation Consultant Association**

[www.uslca.org](http://www.uslca.org)

You can find an IBCLC near you by searching under the “Find an IBCLC” section.

### **New York Lactation Consultant Association**

[www.nylca.org](http://www.nylca.org)

You can find an IBCLC near you in New York State through this website.

### **New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition**

[www.breastfeedingnj.org/resources/provider-info](http://www.breastfeedingnj.org/resources/provider-info)

You can find an IBCLC near you in New Jersey through this website.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

---

Getting Ready for Your Surgery or Procedure While You're Breastfeeding or Lactating - Last updated on December 21, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center