

Leaking Breasts

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Once a baby comes into your life, it may sometimes feel like you'll never be able to make it to bedtime wearing the same shirt you started out with. If you're nursing, spit up might not be the only thing to dampen your shirt. Take heart: you *can* learn how to manage leaking and either prevent it or at least minimize its effects. Pavlov proved that a particular stimulus would create a particular response. It's not hard to draw a parallel between his dogs salivating at the ringing of a bell and a nursing mother's breasts letting down and leaking milk at the sight, sound, smell, or thought of her baby.

Many women leak milk when their milk lets down; this is especially true during the early months of breastfeeding. While this response is absolutely normal, it can make things a bit awkward if you're anywhere but at home when it happens. (Note that some women never leak, and this is normal, too.)

Tips and Tricks for Coping with Leaking

Let it all out

You know what they say: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of ... wet bras and shirts. Sometimes leaking breasts can be a sign that they are too full. Rather than trying to dam the flow, plan ahead and nurse, pump, or hand-express your breasts before you need to go out. Better to get the milk out by your method of choice than to be out somewhere and have your breasts take matters into their own hands ... so to speak.

Be prepared

Nursing pads tucked into each cup of your bra will absorb leaking milk to help protect your clothes and your modesty. Washable cloth pads that you buy or make from folded handkerchiefs or circular pieces of absorbent cloth (e.g., cloth diapers, terrycloth, etc.) are just the thing; however, you'll need to have enough on hand that you can change wet for dry when necessary.

Disposable pads are available and work just as well as cloth pads. Be on the alert for pads that have plastic liners. It's true that a nursing pad with a plastic lining will absorb milk and prevent your bra and shirt from becoming wet. However, it's also true that the plastic lining will trap moisture and prevent your nipples from drying – this is a sure way to get sore nipples. It's much, much easier to prevent nipple soreness than to cope with it. Absorbent, breathable (i.e., without plastic) pads that are changed as needed are definitely the way to go.

Be gentle but firm

Whatever triggers your particular letdown reflex, as soon as you're aware that the flow has started or is about to, apply gentle pressure directly to your nipples. A tried and true method is to cross your arms, with both hands tucked under and against your breasts, and press against your nipples.

Another way is to press against your breasts with your upper arms while resting your chin in your hands. Or you can press one forearm against your breasts and adopt a thoughtful position (chin on thumb and forefinger resting against your cheek) with the other arm. Naturally, you'll probably be thinking something along the lines of, "I wonder how those nursing pads are holding up?"

Blend in

If you're going out and are nervous about leakage, think in terms of camouflage. A patterned top is a better choice than a solid one, and natural fibers are also better able to hide leakage than are synthetics. You can also take along a sweater or jacket to put on in case your other lines of defense don't work out.

With a little forethought and planning, you *can* stay dry and comfortable during your time as a nursing mother.

About the Author

Laurel Haring is a writer. She lives with her family in Wilmington, Delaware, and posts semi-regularly to her blog, [Let Me Say This About That](#).

<http://www.typeamom.net/leaking-breasts.html>