

Preventing Problems: Breast Infection and Soreness



If you feel pain in one or both breasts, this soreness may be caused by:

- Plugged milk ducts
- Breast infection (mastitis)
- Fungal (yeast) infection

Taking steps to prevent problems, asking for help and continuing to breastfeed are important. ***This will make both you and your baby happier and healthier!***



What is a Plugged Duct?

Inside your breast, ducts transport milk to the openings in your nipple. One or more of your milk ducts may become plugged or clogged when milk stays in the breast too long. A plugged duct will cause a small lump that is usually red and painful. Call your health care provider if you feel a painful lump in your breast. A plugged duct can turn into a breast infection if not treated.

What is A Breast Infection?

A breast infection is called “mastitis.” A breast infection can happen when a milk duct is blocked or when germs get into a milk duct through a crack in the nipple. You may have a breast infection if:

- Your breast is warm and tender to touch.
- You have a fever and feel sick.
- Your breast is sore and/or swollen.
- You feel a lump and see redness on your breast.

Call your health care provider right away if you have any of these symptoms. You may need medicine to treat mastitis. You can continue breastfeeding while taking medicine for mastitis.

To prevent plugged ducts and mastitis:

- Encourage baby to feed from both breasts at each feeding.
- If you skip a feeding, pump or hand express milk until your breasts are less full.
- Avoid putting too much pressure on your breasts.
 - *Wear clothes (such as a bra) that are not too tight.*
 - *Try not to sleep in the same position every night.*
 - *Don't hold your baby in the same position for every feeding.*

To Feel More Comfortable

While under a doctor's care for a plugged duct or mastitis, these things may help:

- *Get plenty of rest and drink water.*
- *Nurse as often and for as long as you can.*
- *Put a moist, warm compress on the sore area before feedings.*
- *Gently massage around the sore area while feeding or pumping.*
- *Use hand expression or pump after feedings to better drain your breasts.*
- *Continue breastfeeding! Your milk will not transfer these infections to your baby. Breastfeeding will keep the problem from getting worse and may help speed your recovery.*

What is a Fungal Infection?

A fungal infection may also be called a yeast infection or thrush. These kinds of infections can form on your nipple, in your breast, or in baby's mouth (thrush). These infections are easily passed between baby and mother.

Signs of a fungal infection

- Sore, flaky, pink, or itchy nipples.
- Shooting pain deep in the breast.
- White spots (called thrush) appear in your baby's mouth.

To prevent fungal infections:

- Wash your hands before breastfeeding and after changing a diaper.
- Change your breast pads when they become damp.
- Keep your nipples dry and uncovered as much as you can. Fungus grows in dampness so it's important to keep both you and your baby clean and dry.

If you or your baby has symptoms of a fungal infection, call both your doctor and your baby's doctor so you can both be treated at the same time. You can continue to breastfeed.

Ask for Help

Ask your WIC Nutritionist or Peer Counselor if you have questions about how to keep breastfeeding when you have breast soreness or infections.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact:

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