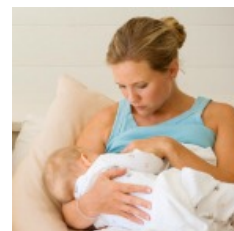




Clogged Milk Ducts

Sometime during the course of breastfeeding, you may experience a sore breast or notice a small lump on your breast that may be red or irritated and hurts when you touch it. This lump may be the result of a clogged milk duct, which can happen if there's an abrupt change in the feeding schedule, inadequate draining of the breast, not varying nursing positions, or wearing clothes or bras that are too tight.



Treatment

A clogged duct should be dealt with immediately since it can lead to a breast infection. The best initial treatment for a clogged duct is to continue nursing, taking care to drain the breast as much as possible with each feeding. (If you suddenly stop breastfeeding, your breast will probably become engorged, which could make the condition worse and lead to an infection.)

Before each feeding, gently massage the breast, beginning on the outside and working your way toward the nipple, paying particular attention to the firm area. Breastfeed as often and as long as possible, offering your baby the sore breast first if you can tolerate it, because your baby will nurse most vigorously on the first breast, thus draining it more effectively.

Try switching positions to allow better drainage. Express milk from that breast after each feeding if your baby has not completely relieved breast fullness. Apply comfortably warm, moist towels on the affected breast several times a day (or take several warm baths or showers), gently massaging the area around the clogged duct down toward the nipple.

If the lump on your breast remains for more than a few days, if it increases in size or redness, or if you develop a fever or significant discomfort, make an appointment to see your doctor.

Prevention

Keeping pressure off your breasts will help prevent clogged ducts. You can do this by wearing clothing that is not restrictive (avoid tight tops, bras, or underwire bras; if necessary, switch to a larger bra size, or go without a bra for a while); by changing your nursing position so that your baby drains the milk from all areas of the breast equally; and by not sleeping on your stomach.

If you notice dried milk plugging the openings in your nipples, wash them gently with warm water after each breastfeeding session. Continued difficulties with clogged ducts may signal a problem with your baby's latching on or with your nursing position. Arrange for a visit with your pediatrician or lactation specialist to correct these problems.

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