

Fact Sheet

Mastitis

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Mastitis is an inflammation of the breast that may lead to infection. Mastitis may occur as a result of a blocked duct that has not cleared. The milk that builds up behind the blocked duct can move into the tissue of the breast and cause the area to become red and swollen. It is important that you start treatment straight away.

Other causes of Mastitis:

- baby not latching well to the breast
- grazed or cracked nipples
- not feeding often enough
- breasts are too full
- stopping breastfeeding suddenly
- tight fitting bra.

Sometimes there is no obvious reason

Signs and Symptoms of mastitis:

- a red, sore area on the breast that may feel 'hot' to touch
- flu-like symptoms- feeling hot and cold
- aching body.

It is safe and recommended to continue to breastfeed your baby when you have mastitis.

Prevention of Mastitis

- Breastfeed baby as often as baby needs to feed (8 to 12 times a day in the early weeks).
- Ensure baby is latching well to the breast.
- Offer baby a feed if your breasts become too full even when baby is not showing feeding cues. If baby won't feed, express some milk to empty your breasts a little.
- Offer both breasts at each feed- if baby only feeds from one breast, start the next feed on the other breast.
- If your breasts feel uncomfortable after baby has fed, express milk until your breasts feel comfortable.
- Avoid offering your baby infant formula unless there is a medical reason to do so.
- Rest as often as you can!



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Treatment of Mastitis

- Continue to breastfeed baby - It is safe to breastfeed when you have Mastitis.
- Place warm cloths or a warm pack on the affected breast before you breastfeed or express. This will help your milk to flow.
- Gently massage the blockage (hard areas on the breast) with the pads of your fingers toward the nipple area. Massage before and while breastfeeding.
- Express milk from the affected breast after breastfeeding until your breast feels comfortable.
- Place a cold pack on the affected area of your breast after feeding and/or expressing. The cold pack should be wrapped in a cloth and left in place for 10-15 minutes. You may repeat this process hourly until the next feed or expressing.
- Pain relief medication may help. Be sure to check with your doctor, pharmacist or 'Mothersafe'- Medications in pregnancy and lactation service
[<http://www.mothersafe.org.au/>]
- Rest as often as you can.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- If you don't start to feel better in a few hours, be sure to see your local doctor.
- If your local doctor prescribes antibiotics for you, take them according to the directions. It is safe to continue to breastfeed your baby when taking antibiotics.

We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.

Send your feedback to:

WSLHD-Get_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au