

Sore Nipples

How to lessen nipple pain from breastfeeding

Sore nipples are common in the first week after birth. Usually, they hurt at the start of a feeding and then feel better as the baby keeps sucking. The soreness is usually worst on the 3rd or 4th day, and starts to get better after that.

Self-care

Before and after feedings, check your nipples to see if the skin is dry or irritated, or if you have scabs. If your nipples are sore, do these things **before** you put your baby to breast:

- Apply warm, wet compresses for a few minutes.
- Massage the *areola* (the dark area around your nipple). This will soften the area, make your nipple stand out, and express a few drops of milk.

Even before your milk volume increases, hand-expressing milk can help prepare your breasts for a feeding. To learn more, visit <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding>.

During Feedings

Making sure your baby attaches deeply to your breast can help reduce nipple pain. Position yourself and your baby carefully every time you breastfeed. Wait until your baby's mouth is wide open, then quickly pull your baby onto your breast. Read the chapter "Attaching Your Baby to Your Breast" in this workbook.

If nursing hurts after 1 minute, stop. Put your finger in your baby's mouth and break the latch and start again. If your baby doesn't attach easily, call us for help.



The key to reducing nipple soreness is making sure your baby attaches deeply to your breast.

After your baby has been feeding for about 10 minutes, watch for changes in your baby's sucking. When there are long pauses and very little sucking, compress and massage your breast to see if your baby will suck more. If your baby does not suck more, break the suction and end the feeding. Comfort nursing is not a good idea while your nipples are sore.

After Feedings

If your nipples are sore or misshapen after feeding, your baby may not be attaching deeply enough to your breast. See the chapter "Attaching Your Baby to Your Breast" in this workbook. And, please call Lactation Services for help with position and latch.

To ease soreness after feeding, apply a thin coat of ointment to your nipples. Try ointments like Lansinoh, Mother Love, or Purelan, or cooking oil like olive or safflower oils. You do not need to wash these ointments or oils off if you wait at least 30 minutes before breastfeeding again. To remove the ointment or oil, dab your nipples gently with a warm, wet washcloth, or soak them for a minute in warm water.

Cracked or Broken Skin

Between feedings, you may use a gel-pad product such as **hydrogel** pads. These are water-based pads that can help heal damaged skin. Wear the pads between feedings. The pads can stay moist for at least 24 hours.

- When you are breastfeeding, place the pads gel-side down on your chest or arm.
- When you're not using the pads, store them in a plastic bag that seals. This helps them stay moist so that you can reuse them. Some moms like to chill them in the refrigerator for extra relief.

You can buy hydrogel pads online or at some maternity stores and many drugstores. Byram Medical Supplies also carries them. Call 800.456.3500 or visit www.byramhealthcare.com.

When to Call

Call Lactation Services if:

- You have pain during the entire feeding.
- The pain is not getting better by 5 days after birth.
- You have oozing, redness, or deep cracks.

Now, please go back to the Table of Contents in this workbook and check the box so your nurses will know you have read this chapter.