



Mastitis is inflammation of the breast which may lead to infection.

Common causes

- Poor attachment to the breast.
- Nipple damage.
- Too long between feeds.
- Breasts which are too full.
- Blocked milk ducts.
- Stopping breastfeeding too quickly.
- Overly tight bra.
- A baby with a tongue-tie who is having problems attaching to the breast. See Tongue-tie fact sheet for more information.

Signs and symptoms

- A red, sore area on the breast.
- You may feel like you have the flu – feeling hot and cold with aching joints.

Prevention

- Breastfeed as often as your baby needs (normally 8–12 times in 24 hours for a young baby).
- Don't miss or put off breastfeeds.
- Wake your baby for a feed if your breasts become too full. If your baby doesn't want to feed you may need to express a small amount of milk for comfort.
- Get some help to make sure your baby is attaching and feeding well at your breast.
- Offer both breasts at each feed. If your baby only feeds from one breast make sure to offer the alternate breast at the next feed.
- Express a small amount of milk after feeds if your breasts still feel full – express only until your breasts feel comfortable.
- Avoid giving your baby formula feeds or other fluids unless advised to by a midwife, nurse or doctor.
- Avoid pressure on your breasts from clothes or from your fingers when feeding.
- Try to get some rest during the day when your baby is asleep.

Treatment

It is important to start treatment at the first signs of mastitis.

- Your breast milk is safe for your baby even if you have mastitis, so continue to breastfeed or express from the affected breast.
- Place a heat pack or warm cloths on the sore area before feeding or expressing to help with your milk flow. If your milk is flowing easily then warm packs are not needed.
- Gently massage any breast lumps towards the nipple when feeding or expressing or when in the shower or bath.
- Continue to breastfeed or express your sore breast until it feels more comfortable.
- Place a cool pack, such as a packet of frozen peas wrapped in a cloth, on the breast after feeding or expressing for a few minutes to reduce discomfort.
- You can take tablets for the pain such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. They are safe to take while breastfeeding.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day (up to 8 glasses).
- Rest as much as possible. Ask your partner, family or friends for help with household tasks.
- If you don't start to feel better after a few hours, you should see a doctor as soon as you can. When making the appointment tell the clinic you think you have mastitis.
- If antibiotics are prescribed by your doctor, take as directed. It is safe to continue to breastfeed when taking these antibiotics.

Where to get more information

Maternal & Child Health Line (24 hours)
Tel: 13 22 29

Australian Breastfeeding Association (24 hour helpline)
Tel: 1800 686 268 Web: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

OTHER CONTACTS

Women's Emergency Centre
Tel (03) 8345 3636