

Sore Nipples

How to treat sore nipples

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 begins to get better after that.

Before You Start Each Feeding

If your nipples are dry and scabbed, apply warm, wet compresses for a few minutes.

Massage the *areola* (the dark part around your nipple) to soften it and to make your nipple stand out and express some drops of milk.

Even in the early days before your milk volumes increase, hand expressing milk can help prepare your breasts for a feeding. To learn more, visit <http://newborns.stanford.edu/Breastfeeding>.

During Feedings

Position yourself and your baby carefully every time you breastfeed. (See the chapter “Position and Latch for Breastfeeding.”)

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

After 10 minutes, watch for changes in your baby’s sucking pattern. When there are long pauses with very little sucking, compress and massage your breast to stimulate her to suck more. If she does not suck more, break the suction and end the feeding. Comfort nursing is not a good idea while your nipples are sore.



To help sore nipples, be sure to position yourself and your baby carefully every time you breastfeed.

If Your Nipples Are Sore After Feeding

Apply a thin coat of ointment to your nipples if they are sore after feeding. You can try lanolin (Lansinoh or Purelan) or cooking oil (olive or safflower). You do not need to wash these ointments or oils off if your baby waits at least 30 minutes before breastfeeding again. If you want to remove the ointment or oil, dab gently with a warm, wet washcloth.

If You Have Cracked or Broken Skin

- **Hydrogel pads:** Between feedings, you may use a gel-pad product such as hydrogel. Hydrogel pads are non-medicated pads that can help damaged skin heal. 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 them, store them in a Ziploc plastic bag. Some moms like to chill them in the refrigerator for added relief.

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

- **Antibiotic ointment:** You can also apply a small amount of non-prescription antibiotic ointment (either Polysporin or Bacitracin) to your skin after feedings.

If you have oozing, redness, or deep cracks, call UWMC Lactation Services at 206.598.4628. Also see *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn* for more help on dealing with cracked or broken skin.

When to Call

Call UWMC Lactation Services if:

- You have pain throughout the entire feeding.
- The pain is not getting better by the 5th day after birth.

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about sore nipples, call Lactation Services: 206.598.4628