

# Breastfeeding: *Easing Sore Nipples*

Breastfeeding shouldn't be painful. Yet, sore nipples are a problem for many women, especially in the first few weeks of breastfeeding. Caring for your skin **before and after** breastfeeding is a great way to help prevent and treat soreness. There are also things that you can do while you are feeding your baby to prevent soreness.

## Care before and after feedings

Care for your nipples before and after feeding by:

- **Keeping them clean.** Wash with warm water only. Don't use soap. Let your nipples dry completely before covering them.
- **Rubbing a small amount of pure lanolin onto them.** Make sure that the lanolin you use is approved for breastfeeding. You can find this product where you buy other breastfeeding supplies.
- **Using prescription ointment cream.** If you have ongoing pain and damaged nipple skin, your doctor may prescribe an ointment. Be sure to:
  - Apply a small amount to your nipples after each feeding (don't wash or wipe it off).
  - Continue to use it for 7 to 10 days.
  - Call your lactation consultant or doctor if your pain continues.
- **Doing saline soaks.** Try soaking your nipples in a mild salt solution (saline) as long as your skin is not broken. Follow these steps:
  - Mix 1 teaspoon of salt with 2 cups warm water.
  - Dip two, gauze pads (2 x 2 size) in the salt solution, and remove them without wringing them out.
  - Place the wet gauze pads on your nipples, molding them to cover all of the sore areas.
  - Keep the pads on for 5 to 10 minutes. Then, remove them, and blot your nipples dry. (You don't need to rinse off your nipples.) You can then apply lanolin, a gel pad (see information at right), or vegetable/olive oil for extra soothing.



## What do I need to do?

- 1 Treat and prevent mild soreness by using the methods described in this handout.
  - 2 If your discomfort lasts more than 2 days or becomes worse, contact a lactation consultant or another healthcare provider.
  - 3 For general help with breastfeeding, call an expert (see contact information on page 2 of this handout).
- **Using gel pads.** Gel pads are products used to heal a wound. You may find them under brand names, such as ComfortGel, HydroGel, MediHoney, and Soothies, at your pharmacy or grocery store. Here's how to use them:
    - Wear the pad under your bra directly against the nipple and areola. Remove them before breastfeeding.
    - Clean the gel pad with cool tap water between feedings. Use gel pads for up to 5 to 7 days before replacing with a new set.
    - Put the gel pads in the refrigerator before use for even more cooling relief. However, don't use lanolin or other ointments on your breasts while using them.
  - **Pumping or squeezing out (expressing) a few drops of your milk and massaging it gently onto your nipples.** Breast milk can soothe your delicate skin. Be sure to let the nipples air dry before covering them.

