

# **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.

# **Care during feedings**

Care for your nipples during feedings by:

- Being aware of your baby's latch (how your baby grasps your nipple in their mouth). You should feel a strong tug when your baby latches on. If you feel pinching or pain, it's possible that your baby isn't latching on correctly. Try this method: As you put your baby to your breast, wait until their mouth is wide open before letting them latch on. You want your baby to grasp onto your areola, not just your nipple, with a wide open mouth. If you don't see this, remove your baby from your breast and try again.
- Breaking the suction before you take your baby from your breast. You can do this by gently inserting your finger into the corner of their mouth.
- Trying different nursing positions. A different position may improve your baby's latch and move pressure off the more sore areas of your nipples. For positioning options, see pages 8 and 9 of <u>A Guide to</u>

  Breastfeeding booklet.



- Breastfeeding about every 2 to
  3 hours to prevent your breasts from becoming too full. Overly full breasts can make it difficult for your baby to latch on correctly. If your breasts do become too full, express (pump or squeeze out) some milk before breastfeeding.
- Not letting your baby chew on them or go to sleep holding your nipple in their mouth.
- Using the right size of flange (if you're using a breast pump). The flange is the funnel-like part that fits over your breast. Make sure your nipples aren't rubbing against the inside of the flanges. If they are, you may need a larger-size flange. These are available at lactation supply stores, online, and from lactation consultants.



## For help with breastfeeding, call:

Questions for my doctor					

Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。