

Breast Care for Breastfeeding Mothers

Breastfeeding is natural, nutritional and beneficial for baby, but if mothers experience challenges or discomfort in the beginning, it may be difficult to keep those benefits in mind. With support from The Birthplace and our lactation team, mothers will learn how to avoid or manage any challenges or discomforts that may occur. By following these simple tips, mothers can successfully and comfortably meet their breastfeeding goals.

Engorgement

Engorgement is swelling of the breasts and filling of the milk ducts that may occur between the second to fifth day after delivery. Prevent engorgement by nursing frequently in the first days. Apply cool compresses to your breasts for five to 10 minutes following nursing to soothe pain and relieve swelling. Full breasts may be too firm for baby to latch. Express milk by doing the following:

- Use moist heat to get milk to flow: shower, tub bath, soak breasts in a basin or use compresses
- Circular massage beginning at chest wall, working toward nipple
- Lean forward and shake shoulders to encourage let-down
- Squeeze out a few drops of milk or use breast pump
- Nursing relieves the fullness. Continue breastfeeding through engorgement
- If you use a breast pump to express milk only remove enough milk, to make yourself feel comfortable

Nipples Need Extra Care During Nursing

- Wash hands before feeding your baby
- Wash breasts with clear water only, soap may be drying
- Allow breastmilk to dry on nipples after nursing

Preventing Sore Nipples

- Change nursing pads after each feeding and when they become wet
- Avoid bra pads with plastic liners because they hold in moisture and cause chapping
- Change baby's position for nursing occasionally. Make certain the baby latches-on to nipple and at least one-half inch of breast tissue
- If baby is not latched-on well, remove baby from breast and stimulate the baby's rooting reflex by tickling your baby's top lip until he opens his mouth wide, then quickly pull him onto your breast until baby latches-on
- Hold baby in close so chin is tucked in close to breast and nose is slightly touching or slightly away from the breast

Treatment of Sore Nipples

- Use expressed milk to heal sore nipples. Express a small amount of milk after you finish nursing and gently rub it onto to the nipple allowing it to air dry
- Apply purified lanolin (if not allergic to wool) to nipples after feeding to keep the nipples moist

- Begin nursing on the more comfortable side first
- Breast shells worn inside the bra can help with comfort if clothing causes too much pressure
- Use warm salt water soaks (8 oz of warm water and 1/4 teaspoon of salt) for 10 to 15 minutes between feedings. Comfort gel pads can be soothing. They are available at [Susquehanna Health Pharmacy](#)

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor and seek assistance from a lactation consultant if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms as a result of breastfeeding:

- cracked or bleeding nipples
- extreme pain while breastfeeding
- a hard, red, painful area on your breast that will not go away
- red spots, streaks or tender areas on your breasts
- you have chills, flulike symptoms or a temperature greater than 100.4°F