

# Mastitis

## Causes, prevention and treatment

### WHAT IS MASTITIS?

**A red, lumpy, painful area on the breast is an early sign of mastitis and can develop quickly if the milk is not removed.** Mastitis is inflammation of the breast tissue. When treated early, more serious infections such as abscesses can be prevented.

### Signs and symptoms

Your breast becomes:	You may have
▶ Painful	▶ Chills or fever
▶ Red	▶ Joint aches and pains
▶ Hot	▶ Flu-like symptoms

It is important to continue breastfeeding. It will help fix the problem quickly.

### Possible causes

- ▶ Incorrect attachment of your baby to the breast.
- ▶ Nipple damage such as grazes or cracks
- ▶ An over-full breast that may make it difficult for your baby to feed
- ▶ Infrequent feeding or a change in the pattern of feeds
- ▶ Pressure on the breast, such as a tight bra or pressure during a feed
- ▶ Favouring one breast
- ▶ Timing of breastfeeds.

### AVOIDING MASTITIS

- ▶ Wash your hands before handling your breasts or nipples.
- ▶ Position and attach your baby to the breast correctly. The nipple may look

slightly stretched after the feed but should not be squashed or flattened.

- ▶ Ensure the breast offered first is soft and comfortable before offering the second side.
- ▶ If your baby only feeds on one side you may need to express some milk from the other side to relieve the pressure.
- ▶ Gently feel your breasts for lumps or tender areas before and after each feed.
- ▶ If you find a lump or tender area, massage towards the nipple before and during feeds.
- ▶ Use different feeding positions and place your baby's chin towards the fullest area during feeds. This will ease the fullness.
- ▶ If you become unwell, feel your breasts for lumps and look for redness (using a mirror can be helpful).
- ▶ If you feel pain when breastfeeding or think you may have mastitis, contact your health care professional.

### IF YOU HAVE MASTITIS

- ▶ Your baby will not get sick. The infection is in the breast tissue, not the milk.
- ▶ Continue to breastfeed until the breast is soft and comfortable.
- ▶ You may need to wake your baby to feed.
- ▶ If unable to feed, hand express or use a pump to soften the breast.
- ▶ Ensure correct position and attachment and do not limit sucking time.
- ▶ Point your baby's chin to the affected area during feeds.
- ▶ Massage the area toward the nipple before and during feeds. A drop of

vegetable oil may help prevent skin friction.

- ▶ A warm pack can be used just before feeds to help milk flow. A cold washer can also help.
- ▶ Apply a cool pack or a washed cabbage leaf after the feed.
- ▶ Feed from the affected breast first for two feeds in a row. Express the other breast for comfort if your baby does not feed from it. Return to starting feeds on alternate breasts.
- ▶ It is important to rest when you can.
- ▶ Take pain relief as directed by your health care professional to relieve pain and other symptoms.

## USE OF ANTIBIOTICS

- ▶ Antibiotics may be prescribed by your doctor and can be used safely when breastfeeding.
- ▶ Your baby may have runny bowel actions and/or be a little unsettled.
- ▶ Take extra care with hand washing.

For more information speak to your health care professional

Contact

Or contact an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor on **1800 686 2 686** (free call from a landline).

If you require a translator to do this, call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on **131 450** and give them the telephone number listed above.