

Mastitis

A red area may develop on your breast. Your breast may be tender, swollen, hot to touch and painful during feeds. You may also have a temperature, aches, chills or other 'flu-like' symptoms.



Image showing redness caused by mastitis



Image showing swelling caused by breast abscess

What can I do?

- Seek urgent advice from your midwife or family doctor because it is likely you will need antibiotics.
- Offer the sore breast first, and feed every two to three hours or sooner if necessary. If your baby won't take the sore breast, start with other side and swap.
- When feeding, apply a warm face cloth/towel to help milk flow - but not on hot areas.
- Massage gently towards the nipple while feeding over the sore area.
- Apply cold packs when you are not feeding (crushed ice/frozen peas in a face flannel or towel) over painful area (not your nipple) 10-20 minutes on, 10 minutes off, and repeat.
- Take paracetamol regularly (one gram every four to six hours, a maximum of four grams in 24 hours).
- Probiotics may be helpful. Talk to your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) or Lactation Consultant.
- Intravenous antibiotics may be needed to treat mastitis and prevent abscess formation.

Breast abscess

A severely painful, tense lump may develop in your breast with redness, heat and swelling. You may have 'flu-like' symptoms and a temperature. Sometimes your skin is an unusual colour at the abscess site. Follow the advice for mastitis and contact your midwife or doctor urgently - hospital treatment is normally needed for a breast abscess.

Mastitis and/or a breast abscess can make you extremely sick - **do not stop breastfeeding or expressing** because this can make your condition worse. If there is no improvement or you feel worse within 12 hours of starting treatment, contact your midwife or a doctor **URGENTLY**.



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Breastfeeding complications

- blocked duct
- engorgement
- mastitis
- breast abscess

What you need to know

Why do problems occur?

Breastfeeding problems occur for a number of reasons. Perhaps you have missed a feed? Or maybe you have nipple damage? Maybe you are wearing an ill-fitting bra or your baby is not sucking normally. It could be that you are overtired and your immunity is low. It is important that you follow the advice here to treat the problem quickly.

What can I do to help?

- Continue to breastfeed frequently from the sore breast – it will not make baby ill – softening the breast helps.
- Hand express if breastfeeding your baby is too painful. Do not use an electric breast pump. How to hand express is explained in your Waitematā DHB 'Breastfeeding – Beginner's Guide'.
- Check you are latching baby well. Gentle massaging towards the nipple may help your milk to flow and soften the breasts. Try different feeding positions to soften different areas of the breast.
- Drink lots of water to stay hydrated. Get plenty of rest and ask friends and family to help you with household chores so that you can focus on feeding your baby.
- Take paracetamol for pain relief regularly (one gram every four to six hours, a maximum of four grams in 24 hours).
- Avoid using a dummy because you may miss your baby's feeding cues.

Blocked duct

The affected area of your breast may feel tender, painful and hard. It may occasionally redden.

You may see milk collection under a spot on your nipple. Your temperature is usually normal.



What can I do?

- Warm your affected breast with a heated towel/face cloth.
- Start feeds on the affected side first, while your baby is most vigorous with suckling.
- Massage towards the nipple during the breastfeed and when showering.
- Take Lecithin 1200mgs three-to-four times a day to reduce recurrent blocked ducts.
- You may see a stringy piece of milk curd coming out of your nipple; this is the blockage clearing and is normal.
- If you see a white spot on your nipple which appears as though skin has grown over it, apply warmth, then massage.
- Contact your midwife if the duct hasn't cleared within 24 hours.

Engorgement

Your breasts become overfull, painful, feel hard and hot. Your skin may look shiny and tight. Your nipples may look flatter than usual. You may have a temperature.



Photo with permission - The Breastfeeding Atlas

Your baby may find it harder to latch and fusses at the breast. Sometimes your milk doesn't flow as freely.

What can I do?

- Warm your affected breast with a warm towel/face cloth; this will dilate the milk ducts and soften the breast to help your baby to latch.
- Wake your baby if your breasts are full and uncomfortable and feed him/her.
- If your baby does not want to feed, hand express (do not use an electric breast pump).
- If you miss a feed, express your breasts until they feel softer and comfortable.