



Women's, Infants, and Children  
Supplemental Nutrition Program

Department of Public Health  
City and County of San Francisco

## Sore Breasts: Plugged Ducts And Mastitis

### Sore Breasts Due To Plugged Ducts

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- ☐ Milk ducts may become plugged and cause a sore area on your breast. A plugged duct may cause these symptoms:
  - a tender spot in a particular area of your breast
  - a red area on your breast
  - a deep ache or itch in one area of your breast
  
- ☐ To treat a plugged duct:
  - **Nurse, Nurse, Nurse!** Feed often and for longer periods. **Start with the sore breast.** Be sure to nurse from both breasts.
  - Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day
  - Rest as much as possible.
  - Apply warm towels to your breasts and massage the painful area before you nurse. It may also help to massage this area while you nurse.
  - Do not wear a bra if it makes you sore or you feel it pressing against your breast.
  - Vary the position you use to feed the baby, such as lying down or using a football hold.
  - Eat less saturated fat. Avoid butter, lard, beef, pork, cheese and whole milk. Instead use peanut butter (that says "natural" on the label), eat nuts, drink low-fat milk and eat chicken (no skin) and fish instead of meat.



## ***Sore Nipples***

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Some women have sore nipples in the first few days of breastfeeding. **Here are some ways to keep from getting sore nipples, and to treat sore nipples:**

- ☐ Check the position you hold your baby in while breastfeeding. The most common cause of sore nipples is incorrect positioning (see information sheet called Your Guide to Breastfeeding).
- ☐ Be sure your baby's mouth is over the areola. If your baby is sucking just the nipple (tip of your breast), break the suction to remove the breast from the baby's mouth, and start again.

Your baby's lips should be one to one and one half inches onto your areola. This is how much of the areola would be covered by your baby's mouth as you look down at him breastfeeding:

\_\_\_\_\_ (1 1/2 inches)



- ☐ To remove your breast after feeding, place your finger in the corner of the baby's mouth to break the suction. This helps prevent sore nipples.
- ☐ If only one nipple hurts, start the feeding on the breast that does not hurt. Babies suck harder when they first start a feeding. Then nurse on the side that hurts.
- ☐ Express some milk before nursing so your baby will not have to suck so hard to stimulate let down.
- ☐ Continue nursing as often as the baby wants.
- ☐ Take acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Ibuprofen®) 1/2 hour before nursing.
- ☐ Check your hand position to make sure you are not pointing the nipple up and rubbing it into the roof of the baby's mouth. Make sure your fingers are not covering the areola.
- ☐ Put some breast milk on your nipples and areola after nursing. Let your nipples air dry.
- ☐ If you notice any burning pain in your breast when you nurse, call your doctor. Some sore nipples may be caused by thrush or another infection in the baby's mouth.

**For breastfeeding questions, pump loans, classes, or other help, call your WIC Clinic.**

Standards for participation in the WIC Program are the same for everyone regardless of race, religion, national origin, color, sex, political beliefs or handicaps. Persons believing they have been discriminated against may write to: Secretary of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C. 20250. Developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health WIC Program, Rev., 8/2002.