

## ***Your important health information***

# **Mastitis**

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Mastitis is an inflammation of the breast tissue.

### **Signs and symptoms**

- Red, painful, swollen, lumpy, and hot areas in one or both breasts.
- Feeling unwell, often with shivers, aches and pains, and a high temperature; it can feel like you have the flu. This feeling can sometimes start very suddenly and get worse very quickly.

### **Common causes:**

- blocked milk ducts that have not cleared
- baby not attached well to your breast
- nipple damage
- long gaps between feeds or missed feeds
- bra or clothing too tight and pressing into your breast
- suddenly stopping breastfeeding or expressing
- using too much force when massaging your breasts
- tiredness.

### **If you are expressing your breastmilk, other causes could be:**

- not draining your breast well
- long gaps between expressions
- breast pump flange pressed too firmly into your breast
- breast pump flanges too small or too large
- breast pump settings too strong or too high.

### **Treatment/what to do**

- Rest and sleep as much as possible.
- Keep breastfeeding and/or expressing more often from your sore breast.
- Make sure your other breast isn't becoming too full or sore.
- Make sure your baby is well latched to your breasts. If you are concerned about attachment, speak with your midwife or lactation consultant.
- Removing your bra or tight clothing may help when feeding or expressing.
- Changing feeding positions may help clear the blockage.
- Applying a warm compress to your breast or having a warm shower just before a feed or expressing may help your milk flow.
- Gently massage your breast by softly stroking towards the nipple while your baby feeds or when expressing.

- Express, by hand and/or pump, after feeds if your baby won't suck or has not drained your breast well.
- Applying a cool pack to the sore area after breastfeeding or expressing may help reduce pain and swelling.
- Medicines such as ibuprofen (Nurofen) and/or paracetamol (Panadol or Panamax) may be taken to help with the swelling and pain. Check with your doctor or pharmacist as to what is most appropriate for you.
- Keep eating normally and drink plenty of fluids.
- Your doctor may prescribe you a course of antibiotics such as Flucloxacillin, Dicloxacillin, Cephalexin or Clindamycin.
- Some mothers get thrush infections after a course of antibiotics, please talk to your doctor if you are concerned.
- You may be referred to a physiotherapist who may use ultrasound and/or lymphatic massage to help reduce pain and inflammation.

## **Please note**

**It is safe to keep breastfeeding and/or expressing while taking antibiotics that are commonly prescribed for mastitis.**

**Although rare, a breast abscess can form when mastitis is not properly treated.**

**If you wish to stop breastfeeding or expressing (wean), it is important to wait until the mastitis is cleared. For help with weaning, speak with your midwife or lactation consultant.**

### **Further Information**

If you have any questions about this information, please contact:

#### **Mercy Hospital for Women**

Breastfeeding Support Service  
Phone: 03 8458 4677

Emergency Department  
Phone: 03 8458 4000

Pharmacy Department:  
Phone: 03 8458 4666

Physiotherapy Department  
Phone: 03 8458 4141

#### **Werribee Mercy Hospital**

Breastfeeding Support Service  
Phone: 03 8754 3407

Emergency Department  
Phone: 03 8754 3327

Pharmacy Department:  
Phone: 03 8754 3541

### **Other services**

Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline  
Phone: 1 800 686 268

Maternal & Child Health Line  
Phone: 13 22 29

Private Lactation Consultants  
[www.lcanz.org](http://www.lcanz.org)

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