

Breast inflammation: Plugged Ducts and Early Mastitis

Symptoms: A tender, hard lump, or a wedge-shaped area of engorgement in the breast. You may also feel run down and have a fever. Prompt treatment is recommended to avoid general discomfort and complications such as infectious mastitis or a breast abscess.

What is Mastitis?

Mastitis refers to different breast conditions that involve inflammation of the breast such as plugged ducts, early mastitis (non-infectious), infectious mastitis and abscesses.

A 'plugged duct' is not really a 'plug'. It is the narrowing of one duct, which can cause pain, swelling, and milk to back up.

Causes:

Inflammation/swelling causing narrowing of the ducts that carry milk through the breast. Inflammation, rather than an infection, is usually the reason for the above symptoms.

Possible reasons may be:

- oversupply or "hyperlactation"
- pumping
- nipple shield use
- imbalance of normal bacteria in the breast the microbiome or "dysbiosis"

INITIAL TREATMENT

Prompt treatment can help prevent a breast infection. Current evidence recommends BAIT, or Breast Rest, Anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs), Ice and Tylenol.

Breast Rest

- Continue to breastfeed by your baby's feeding cues, starting on the healthy breast for the next few days until things feel better.
- If possible, breastfeed directly (not pumping, not using a nipple shield).
- If you are pumping exclusively: pump enough for your baby, do not try to "empty" the breasts

Ice

- Apply ice/cold packs for 10-20 minutes every one to two hours while you are awake.
- Avoid too much heat. However, if a warm compress prior to breastfeeding or pumping is soothing, you can use it sparingly.

Anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs like ibuprofen) and pain relief medications (Tylenol)

- Take ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) every 6-8 hours at "anti-inflammatory" dosing, as directed by your provider. The prescription you might have had after delivery (600mg) is good.
- Take acetaminophen every 6-8 hours to treat pain and fever, as directed by your provide.

WHAT ELSE CAN HELP?

If you are prone to getting breast inflammation, consider:

Sunflower Lecithin

- 2400 mg 3 times a day. Lecithin is a phospholipid which helps the stickiness of the milk fat.

Probiotics

- These two strains may be helpful for breastfeeding problems: Lactobacillus Fermentum CECT5716, Lactobacillus Salivarius CECT5713
- Here are some possible sources:
- Elactia (Everidis, St Louis Missouri) (L fermentum)
- Target b2 (Klaire Labs, Reno Nevada) (L fermentum)
- Solaray Women's Mycrobioime (L fermentum and L Salivarius)

Use Caution with Massage

- Avoid hard/deep massage on the breast and vibration; this will make the inflammation worse.
- Consider gentle massage specifically for breast inflammation:
- Lymphatic breast massage <https://lacted.org/videos/> (scroll down to lymphatic drainage video)
- Hand expression <https://vimeo.com/65196007>

Nutrition and Rest

- Eat a healthy diet consisting of fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains, spices and adequate omega 3 fatty acids. Avoid processed foods.
- Inflammation usually happens when you are run down, get as much support as possible so you can sleep/rest more.
- Drink plenty of fluids if you have a fever.

Call your OB Provider's office (415-353-2566) if:

Your symptoms do not improve in 48 hours. You have hard lump that remains on the breast (even if you feel better) after 48 hours. The redness on your skin spreads quickly across your breasts. (Note: it is normal to have a "wedge" of redness appear on the breast when you have a plugged ducts or early mastitis; this alone is not a cause for concern)