

Plugged Ducts & Mastitis

A **plugged duct** is a plug of milk that sits in a milk duct, causing new milk to “back up”. You may feel a firm or lumpy area in your breast that is more noticeable when your breast is full. If you feel a lumpy area in your breast and your **breast is red**, you feel **achy like you have the flu**, or you have a **low-grade fever** (less than 38.4 C or 101 F), you have mastitis, or an inflammation of the breast, which may or may not involve an infection.

What can you do?

- **Continue to breastfeed your baby frequently** (8-12 + times in 24 hours).
- **Rest (go to bed!)** and drink plenty of fluids.
- **Apply heat** to your breast before breastfeeding to promote drainage. **You may also apply a castor oil pack** before breastfeeding or pumping: pour castor oil liberally onto a warm, wet washcloth – apply it to the firm or lumpy area on your breast – cover with plastic wrap – apply a heating pad so area feels warm (but not hot) - leave in place for ~20 minutes. **Rinse breast with water before breastfeeding** or pumping to avoid baby ingesting the castor oil.
- **Massage and compress** the firm or lumpy area on your breast while breastfeeding or pumping.
- **Pump** the affected breast if your baby does not thoroughly drain the breast after feeding, or if baby refuses the breast.
- **Take ibuprofen** to reduce inflammation (up to 400 mg every 4 hours).
- Two studies have shown benefit from taking **Lactobacillus probiotics** for mastitis; both studies used *Lactobacillus salivarius*. This species is present in the “Complete Formula” available at MilkWorks. (*Arroyo R, et al. Treatment of infectious mastitis during lactation: antibiotics versus oral administration of lactobacilli isolated from breast milk. Clin. Infect. Dis. June 15, 2010;50(12):1551–1558. Oral Administration of Lactobacillus Strains Isolated from Breast Milk as an Alternative for the Treatment of Infectious Mastitis during Lactation E. Jiménez et al Appl. Environ. Microbiol. 2008 August; 74(15): 4650–4655*)
- **For recurring mastitis or plugged ducts**, consider taking lecithin: 1200 mg, 3-4x/day.

IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- You see no change in 12-24 hours (you feel no better),
- Your fever continues, or goes higher than 101 F,
- The red area on your breast increases in size, or you see red streaks on your breast,
- You see blood or pus in your milk, or
- You have a cracked nipple on the breast that is red and sore.

YOU MAY NEED AN ANTIBIOTIC. Please call your physician or nurse-midwife. If you are prescribed an antibiotic, take the complete prescribed course, and consider taking a multi-strain probiotic as well.

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