

Nipple Blisters or Blebs

A nipple blister or bleb starts as a white or yellow spot on the nipple, but if it breaks open immediately, you may only see a tiny red tender spot. It can be quite painful.

- Although not thoroughly understood, we think that a nipple blister/bleb is a bulging damaged milk duct. Often a bleb occurs after trauma to the nipple. If your baby's latch has not been assessed, you may want to see a lactation consultant. If your baby is more than a few months old, a common cause is "yanking" on the nipple to stimulate faster flow, or to see who walked into the room.
- **If the bleb is not painful** and not causing any problems, it is okay to do nothing and let it resolve on its own.
- **You may apply warm wet packs** or a cotton ball soaked in olive oil in order to soften it. **If the bleb is less than 48 hours old, gentle manipulation of the nipple** behind the plug may cause the softened bleb to open. It can also be opened with a sharp, sterile needle; this is often not successful if the blister is more than a few days old.
- **Once the bleb 'opens'** we recommend that you apply some Lanolin to the nipple after each breastfeeding for a week or so to try and prevent the bleb from closing again. Polysporin is also a good choice, to protect from infection.
- **If the bleb is not 'open'**, it may cause milk to back up and create a tender mass in the breast – "a plugged milk duct." This could lead to mastitis.
- **Rest frequently and eat well.** Mothers who are experiencing recurrent plugged ducts within the breast may benefit from the addition of lecithin to their diet (~1200 mg, 3 to 4x a day).
- **While blebs may be annoying and painful, they are not dangerous** unless they lead to mastitis. **If the bleb is painful and not resolving**, there have been reports that applying a steroid ointment under an occlusive dressing can be helpful. Apply a very small amount of 1% hydrocortisone ointment (available over-the-counter) to the bleb, then cover with a large (~ 6 inch square) piece of plastic wrap. Repeat every time after you feed or pump that breast until it is no longer painful. Do not continue after 1 week if the bleb is not improving.

MilkWorks
LINCOLN & OMAHA



**Community
Breastfeeding
Center**

5930 S. 58th Street
(in the Trade Center)
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 423-6402

MilkWorks O
10818 Elm Street
Rockbrook Village
Omaha, NE 68144
(402) 502-0617

For additional
information:



www.milkworks.org