

## Breast Infection (Mastitis)

Mastitis begins as inflammation in the breast tissue. If it is not treated quickly it can develop into an infection. It starts suddenly and usually occurs in one breast only.

Signs may include:

- Pain, redness, swelling and heat on your breast.
- Red streaking on your breast.
- Fever and flu-like symptoms.
- Feeling achy and run down.
- Feeling nauseated.

Call your health care provider or *Telehealth Ontario 24/7 Breastfeeding Supports* at 1-866-797-0000 if you have signs and symptoms of mastitis.

The *Bilingual Online Ontario Breastfeeding Services* directory at [www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca](http://www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca) can help you connect and get help and support from peers, professionals and experts.

### Causes of Mastitis

Mastitis can have a number of causes:

- You have damaged or cracked nipples and germs can enter into the breast tissue.
- Your baby is not latching or sucking well. They may not remove enough milk from your breast.
- Your baby suddenly feeds much less than usual. This can lead to a backup of milk in one or both of your breasts.
- Your baby takes only one breast for a few feeds after usually taking both.
- You are wearing a bra or baby carrier that is too tight.
- You are putting pressure from a purse, tight bra or something else across an area of your breast.
- You are feeling tired, stressed or run-down.
- If you have a blocked duct that you can't clear in a day or two and you have some of the signs and symptoms mentioned above, call your health care provider right away.



For more information on blocked ducts see the fact sheet *Block Ducts* that complements the *Breastfeeding Matters* booklet at [http://en.beststart.org/for\\_parents/do-you-have-baby-0-12-months](http://en.beststart.org/for_parents/do-you-have-baby-0-12-months).

### Breastfeeding During Mastitis

Continue to breastfeed whenever your baby shows feeding cues. It is safe to feed your baby from the breast with mastitis. The antibodies in your milk will protect your baby from infection.

## What you can do:

- Breastfeed frequently to keep your milk moving. If your breast is too painful, hand express and/or pump your breast milk as often as your baby feeds or whenever your breast feels uncomfortable or full.
- Before breastfeeding or expressing, apply a warm compress to the affected area. You can also take a warm bath or shower. Gently massage the breast while doing this to help the milk flow more easily.
- Offer the sore breast to your baby first whenever possible. If it is too painful begin on the other breast and then switch to the breast with mastitis as your baby's suck becomes more gentle.
- Try different breastfeeding positions to have your baby remove as much milk as possible from the sore breast.
- Position your baby at the breast with their nose pointing to the red area on your breast. This will help drain your breast in the affected area.
- After the feeding, express your milk by hand or a pump to help drain your affected breast.
- You can apply a cold pack to your breast to decrease pain and swelling.
- Drink whenever you feel thirsty and eat healthy snacks and meals according to *Canada's Food Guide*.
- Get plenty of rest.
- If possible, ask friends or family members to help with errands and household tasks.

## Medication

- Your health care provider may prescribe a pain reliever and an antibiotic.
- It is important to follow your pharmacist and health care provider's instructions and to take all your medication even if you start to feel better.
- Many medications are safe for your baby while you are breastfeeding. Always check with your health care provider to be sure.

