

# Breastfeeding & Your Baby

## CRACKED & SORE NIPPLES



**ACT**  
Government  
Health

Breastfeeding should not be painful. If your nipple is sore, or you notice it is squashed, pale, ridged or flattened after a feed, the most likely cause is incorrect latch to the breast. Sometimes the skin on the nipple becomes so red and inflamed that it breaks. This is known as a grazed nipple or cracked nipple.

### What causes cracked or sore nipples?

- Incorrect breastfeeding latch
- Dermatitis of the nipple
- Infection or thrush of the nipple
- Milk plugs (white spots).
- Infant with a tongue tie

### How do I prevent getting a cracked nipple?

- Correct positioning and latch of the baby to the nipple (see Positioning for Breastfeeding fact sheet).
- Feed your baby when they are ready, looking for early feeding cues such as - opening and closing their mouth, sucking on hands, crying etc.
- Make sure suckling remains comfortable during the whole feed. Suckling should not be painful.
- To take your baby off the breast, break the suction with your finger at the corner of their mouth and put your finger over the nipple as they come off.
- Leave your bra off and allow your nipples to air after feeds.
- Avoid contact with nipple-damaging and drying agents (soaps, shampoos and detergent residue in clothes).
- If you are using breast pads, keep them dry and change them often.



### What should I do if I think my nipple has cracked?

- Many of the previous tips are also useful to help heal a sore or cracked nipple.
- Seek professional advice for observation of a breastfeed.
- If it is too painful to feed you will need to express your breast milk and giving it to your baby with a cup or bottle and seek professional advice.
- Use a nipple shield when breastfeeding
- Apply a small amount of purified lanolin after each breastfeed.
- Express a small amount of breast milk and apply to your nipples following a feed.
- Use nipple protectors or breast shells from your pharmacy to protect tender nipples from clothing.
- If healing is slow or feeding continues to be painful please see your health professional.

## How do I treat nipple pain?

- Start the feed on the least sore side.
- Apply a warm water compress over your nipple after a feed until pain subsides, then apply breast milk or a small amount of purified lanolin to the nipple.
- Take oral analgesia such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- Monitor breasts for lumpy areas and redness that may indicate the development of mastitis. If you suspect or develop mastitis you should seek medical advice.

## What is a milk blister or white spot?

- Occasionally a mother may notice a white spot on her sore nipple. This may be milk in a duct under a very fine layer of skin that has grown over a nipple pore. These are also called 'blebs'.

## What should I do if I notice this?

- Apply moist heat to the affected area prior to breastfeeding.
- A cotton ball soaked with olive oil can be used instead of a warm compress to soften skin.
- Breastfeed or use a breast pump following heat treatment.
- If the white spot is still there you may need medical assistance to remove skin from the duct.
- An oral supplement called lecithin has been found to be helpful if recurrent milk plugs occur.

## How can I find out more information

### 1. PHONE

**Maternal and Child Health service** by calling Community Health Intake (CHI) 6207 9977

**Pregnancy Birth & Baby** 1800 882 436

**Australian Breastfeeding Association**  
1800 Mum 2 Mum or 1800 686 268

### 2. ATTEND

#### 'Early Days' Group

(infants up to 3 months of age) for assessment and ongoing breastfeeding information and support.

**Contact Community Health Intake (CHI) for locations and times.**

### 3. VISIT

ACT Government Health Directorate website:  
[www.health.act.gov.au/breastfeeding](http://www.health.act.gov.au/breastfeeding)



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