

# Breastfeeding & Your Baby

## NIPPLE VASOSPASM



**ACT**  
Government  
Health



Vasospasm is a sudden constriction (cramping) of blood vessels in the nipple. It can be very painful and may feel like a burning, shooting or throbbing pain. The nipple may change colour - turning white, blue and red before resuming its normal colour. The pain may be felt before, during and /or after a feed. Symptoms may last for a few seconds, minutes or longer.

### **You are more likely to suffer nipple vasospasm if you:**

- Have a family history of Raynaud's phenomenon.
- Tend to have 'poor circulation' (i.e. cold hands or feet).
- Have a low body mass index (i.e. are thin).

### **Possible triggers of vasospasm include:**

- Nipple reaction to cold air.
- Poor attachment of the baby to the breast.
- Nipple damage, nipple thrush or infection.
- Improper use of breast pumps and nipple shields.
- Some medications and chemicals may worsen vasospasm, for example smoking.



## How can I manage vasospasm?

Although there is not a specific cause of vasospasm, avoiding the triggers will help.

- Ensure correct latch of the baby to the breast.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine.
- Keep nipples warm (e.g. a heat pack or warmed soft cloth).
- Wear an extra layer of clothing.
- Breast warmers are available to buy from the Australian Breastfeeding Association
- Try nipple massage with warm olive oil

## If pain continues you may consider:

- Ibuprofen and Paracetamol as per instructions on the packaging
- Fish oil, evening primrose oil or magnesium supplements may improve blood vessel relaxation and reduce spasm
- Prescription medication from your GP.

## 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:

[www.health.act.gov.au/breastfeeding](http://www.health.act.gov.au/breastfeeding)

### 4. SEE YOUR GP

## REFERENCES

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