

## Postnatal

## Breast Care

### Information Sheet

SportsMed Subiaco physiotherapists can provide inpatient and outpatient treatments for the following common breast issues after giving birth.

#### Nipples

Women often complain of sore nipples when starting to breastfeed. This is normal and as nipples get used to breastfeeding, the pain should subside. Sometimes the nipples may blister, graze or crack due to various reasons. These include:

- Mother and baby still learning how to feed
- Baby sucking strongly
- Sensitive nipple tissue
- Cluster feeding which doesn't give the nipples time to rest

Lasinoh is an effective product to keep your nipples hydrated and minimise or prevent further cracking. This can be bought over the counter at a chemist.

If nipples are blistered, grazed or cracked, physiotherapy can provide laser treatment to help speed up the natural recovery process. This treatment is pain-free, has no side-effects and doesn't interfere with breastfeeding.

#### Breast engorgement

Breast engorgement is common for women as a precursor to the milk coming in 1-4 days after birth. Breasts often feel full and uncomfortable.

#### Engorgement can be managed with:

- Warm showers and warm compresses over breasts before feeds to assist milk flow.
- Cold compresses over breasts after feeding for comfort.

Should symptoms persist, ultrasound treatment may be helpful to encourage milk flow and relieve engorgement.

#### Blocked milk ducts and Mastitis

Mastitis is usually the result of a blocked milk duct that has not cleared. Some of the milk banked up behind the blocked duct can be forced into nearby breast tissue causing inflammation. This is called mastitis which can be non-infective or infective.

#### Factors which may lead to mastitis include:

- Poor drainage of the breast or delayed/missed feed
- Tight or ill-fitting bra or underwire digging in
- Holding breast too firmly during feeding or massaging too firmly
- Trauma such as a kick from a toddler or pressure from a seatbelt.
- Nipple trauma
- Poor breast hygiene



# Postnatal Breast Care

## Blocked milk ducts and Mastitis cont...

### Management of a blocked duct and non-infective mastitis can include:

- Continuing to breastfeed to maximise drainage
- Applying a heat pack or having a warm shower prior to feeds to facilitate milk flow
- Applying a cold compress after feeds for comfort
- Gentle light massage strokes with flat fingers from beyond the blockage towards the nipple to help relieve blockage. Note – heavy strokes can cause bruising and further swelling.

If the blockage doesn't clear within 8-12 hours, ultrasound treatment can be very useful.

If flu-like symptoms are experienced, seek medical help. If doctor believes it is an infective mastitis, antibiotics will be prescribed.

### Management of infective mastitis includes:

- Continuing to breastfeed whilst on antibiotics. Baby may experience a few runny nappies but it will not cause them any harm
- Ultrasound treatment once antibiotics have been taken for 24 hours
- Application of cold compresses after feeds
- Resting and maintaining adequate fluid intake
- Analgesia for pain relief as required

Ask at reception or call today on **08 9382 9600**

