

Breastfeeding is not supposed to hurt, but a newborn baby has a very strong suck and the nipple tissue is sensitive. For that reason, many mothers experience some level of nipple soreness during the first few days after birth.

During these early days, you can expect the initial latch to be painful as your baby stretches the nipple and areolar tissue far back into their mouth. With good positioning, this tenderness should go away as the milk lets down. For the rest of the feeding, you should feel a strong pulling sensation.

What are some things I can do to help relieve nipple soreness?

Before feedings:

- Make yourself comfortable with pillows and a foot stool.
- Undress your baby, take off your bra and place your baby skin-to-skin.
- If your breasts are engorged, try to express a small amount of milk to soften the areola, (either with hand expression or with a breast pump).
- Apply a warm, moist compress for a few minutes to help your milk to “let-down”.

During feedings:

- Offer the least sore breast first which should help your baby latch more gently on the other side.
- Make sure your baby is properly positioned at the breast:
 - Baby’s mouth is wide open
 - Baby’s chin is deep into breast tissue
 - Baby is facing breast “tummy to tummy”
- Try different positions at each feeding to help determine which is most comfortable.

- cross cradle
- football
- side-lying
- Breastfeed frequently, at least every 2 to 3 hours.
- If you must remove baby from the breast, gently break suction by inserting your finger between the baby's gums.

In between feedings:

- Express a little milk or colostrum onto the tip of the nipple and let it dry.
- Keep nipples exposed to air as much as possible. When this is difficult, you can wear plastic dome-shaped **breast shells** to prevent your clothing from rubbing on the nipples.
- Use a fresh nursing pad (if needed) when wearing a bra and change the pad when it becomes damp.

What can I put on my nipples to help relieve the pain?

- Apply **purified lanolin** (available at most pharmacies) if your nipples are dry. Purified lanolin is not harmful to your baby and can be left on the nipples during feedings.
- Use **hydrogel pads** instead of lanolin if your nipples are slightly damaged. Hydrogel pads can be cooled in the refrigerator and worn in the bra between feedings.
- Contact your health care provider if your nipples are severely damaged with visible cracking or bleeding. These injuries can put you at risk for bacterial or fungal infections, which can lead to a breast infection called mastitis. A prescription for a medicated "**All Purpose Nipple Ointment**" may be helpful to treat or prevent an infection.

Can I take any medication for the pain?

Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen are compatible with breastfeeding and can be taken as directed for discomfort.

I want to breastfeed, but it is too painful to feed my baby at the breast.

What can I do?

If breastfeeding is too painful, your lactation consultant may advise that you stop breastfeeding for 24 hours on one or both breasts. During this time, it will be important to continue expressing your milk to maintain your supply and avoid engorgement. Expressing your milk by hand may be less painful, or you can pump with a double electric breast pump on a gentle setting. You should express your milk as often as your baby feeds or at least every 2-3 hours.

When should I call my health care provider?

- Most cases of nipple soreness disappear completely within a day or two. If your nipple soreness increases or lasts beyond the first week, contact a lactation consultant for help.
 - For general breastfeeding questions, please call the Lactation Help Line at (844) 200-8894. You will be asked to leave a message and a lactation consultant will return your call within 24 hours.
- If you notice signs of infection, including fever, redness or swelling, contact your health care provider.
 - If you delivered your baby within the past 6 weeks, you can call Triage at (734) 764-8134.

Remember:

- **Avoid** using drying agents such as antibiotic soap or alcohol based products on your nipples.
- **Avoid** “nipple creams” other than purified lanolin.

- The best treatment for sore nipples is prevention with proper positioning and latching techniques. Your nurse or lactation consultant can help you and your baby learn how to achieve a comfortable latch.

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