



LACTATION INSIGHTS

WELCOME to the Winter, 2006 edition of Lactation Insights! This newsletter is written and published quarterly by Janet to support breastfeeding mothers and their families.

MASTITIS OR PLUGGED DUCT?

I've had a lot of calls lately from women who are experiencing either plugged ducts or mastitis. Let's take a moment to review some measures that you can take to help relieve these conditions.

A plugged duct can cause swelling of the breast and acute pain. Often a red area is visible. The red area can feel hot and be tender to the touch. It can feel like a bruised lump. Usually there is no fever with a plugged duct.

Mastitis is a plugged duct that has become infected. Mastitis causes pain and is generally accompanied by fever and acute tenderness and redness of the breast (you may feel like you are getting sick with the flu). The infected breast may become hard, lumpy, and swollen. Breast infections are almost always a sign of too little rest. It is important to nurse often during mastitis, keeping the breast empty to promote prompt healing. The breast infection won't make your infant sick.

Treatment of either condition starts out the same: **Heat, rest, and empty breast.** Apply heat to the tender area, get plenty of rest (stay off your feet), and keep the breast as empty as possible. Take ibuprofen continually for 24 to 48 hours to reduce swelling and allow the plug to pass. Continue ibuprofen longer if the swelling isn't completely gone after 2 days.

Mastitis requires additional measures:

Run very warm water into a sink or bowl. Bend over the bowl of hot water and immerse your breast in it. Allow the milk to flow out, massaging down from the back of the breast toward the nipple. This relieves engorgement and eases pain. Nurse your baby immediately afterward, if possible. Hot water stimulates circulation and eases the tension in taut tissue. Use the hot water to soak the breast 4-5 times per day in short (3-5 minute) sessions.

After your baby nurses, apply a cold poultice of grated raw potato to draw out the heat of inflammation, localize infection, and unblock clogged ducts. Grate raw potato and apply directly to the breasts, covering with a clean cloth. Wear a knit bra or nighttime bra to hold grated potato in place. Remove potato or replace when dry.

Take **Echinacea** (2 capsules every 4 hours) to enhance the activity of your body's immune system. The herb Echinacea has anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and antioxidant properties. Continue Echinacea until the infection is cleared.

If inflammation and pain continue beyond 24 hours, purchase homeopathic Phytolacca 30c from a health food store. Place 2 pills under your tongue and let them dissolve in your mouth. Do not touch the pills with your fingers (it decreases their effectiveness). Take 2 pills every hour (away from food or drink). Take up to 10 does, if needed.

If your fever is 101 degrees or higher, call your doctor and ask for a prescription for an antibiotic. Take the antibiotic as directed and continue with the suggestions described above. Often if the above

measures are begun immediately, antibiotics will not be needed.

FORMULA MARKETING

In a groundbreaking step for mothers and babies, Massachusetts became the first state in the U.S. to prohibit hospitals from giving out free formula company diaper bags to new parents.

Multiple studies, including research from prestigious medical journals such as the *Lancet*, have shown that the bags interfere with breastfeeding, causing mothers to switch to formula sooner, or stop nursing altogether (even when the bags do not contain formula samples). When breastfeeding ends too early, parents endure the additional expense of formula and society ends up paying for medication and time lost from work to care for a sick child.

For decades, formula companies in the U.S. have used hospitals to hand out diaper bags stocked with coupons and free samples. Most parents see these as a “free gift”. However, the bags are a marketing technique that implies that the hospital endorses the product, successfully boosting sales of formula at the expense of breastfeeding. As proof of the companies’ influence, parents almost always continue to use the brand of formula their baby received in the hospital - and those formulas are typically the most expensive.

The new rules on formula marketing are part of a much larger update of existing perinatal regulations written by the U.S. Department of Public Health and approved by the Public Health Council in December, 2005. Hospitals must follow DPH regulations in order to be allowed to operate in the state. The regulations contain many other mandates that help

promote and support breastfeeding and otherwise limit formula marketing.

In addition to giving out free diaper bags, the vast majority of hospitals in the U.S. also accept free formula for in-hospital use. This marketing practice deviates from the standards followed by health care providers and hospitals in every other respect. Hospitals would never be allowed to give out free coupons for Big Macs on the cardiac unit! So why should they give out an item that is clearly associated with adverse health outcomes in children and mothers?

MILK SUPPLY ISSUES?

One quick and simple way to help your milk supply is to eat a bowl of oatmeal (the kind you cook for at least one minute). Oatmeal is a good source of fiber and iron. The increased nutritional status for some moms results in a better milk supply. Oatmeal is also a comfort food for many people: if it increases relaxation in mom, it can encourage milk release and thus increase milk supply. Many lactation consultants recommend oatmeal along with other appropriate herbs to increase milk supply.

Another quick and simple way to help with milk release (let-down) is by using acupressure. You can “pinch” the webbing on your hand between the thumb and forefinger (pointer finger) and do a gentle, circular massage for one to three minutes. This is quite effective at increasing oxytocin levels. You can do this **prior to** or **during** nursing or pumping.

Janet Talmadge, BA, IBCLC, RLC
Lactation Innovation
www.lactationinnovation.com
(630) 357-0028