Mastitis
Causes, prevention and treatment

WHAT IS MASTITIS?
A red, lumpy, painful area on the breast is an early sign of mastitis and can develop quickly if the milk is not removed. Mastitis is inflammation of the breast tissue. When treated early, more serious infections such as abscesses can be prevented.

Signs and symptoms
Your breast becomes: You may have
- Painful
- Red
- Hot
- Chills or fever
- Joint aches and pains
- Flu-like symptoms

Possible causes
- Incorrect attachment of your baby to the breast.
- Nipple damage such as grazes or cracks
- An over-full breast that may make it difficult for your baby to feed
- Infrequent feeding or a change in the pattern of feeds
- Pressure on the breast, such as a tight bra or pressure during a feed
- Favouring one breast
- Timing of breastfeeds.

AVOIDING MASTITIS
- Wash your hands before handling your breasts or nipples.
- Position and attach your baby to the breast correctly. The nipple may look slightly stretched after the feed but should not be squashed or flattened.
- Ensure the breast offered first is soft and comfortable before offering the second side.
- If your baby only feeds on one side you may need to express some milk from the other side to relieve the pressure.
- Gently feel your breasts for lumps or tender areas before and after each feed.
- If you find a lump or tender area, massage towards the nipple before and during feeds.
- Use different feeding positions and place your baby’s chin towards the fullest area during feeds. This will ease the fullness.
- If you become unwell, feel your breasts for lumps and look for redness (using a mirror can be helpful).
- If you feel pain when breastfeeding or think you may have mastitis, contact your health care professional.

IF YOU HAVE MASTITIS
- Your baby will not get sick. The infection is in the breast tissue, not the milk.
- Continue to breastfeed until the breast is soft and comfortable.
- You may need to wake your baby to feed.
- If unable to feed, hand express or use a pump to soften the breast.
- Ensure correct position and attachment and do not limit sucking time.
- Point your baby’s chin to the affected area during feeds.
- Massage the area toward the nipple before and during feeds. A drop of
vegetable oil may help prevent skin friction.

- A warm pack can be used just before feeds to help milk flow. A cold washer can also help.
- Apply a cool pack or a washed cabbage leaf after the feed.
- Feed from the affected breast first for two feeds in a row. Express the other breast for comfort if your baby does not feed from it. Return to starting feeds on alternate breasts.
- It is important to rest when you can.
- Take pain relief as directed by your health care professional to relieve pain and other symptoms.

**USE OF ANTIBIOTICS**

- Antibiotics may be prescribed by your doctor and can be used safely when breastfeeding.
- Your baby may have runny bowel actions and/or be a little unsettled.
- Take extra care with hand washing.

For more information speak to your health care professional

Or contact an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor on **1800 686 2 686** (free call from a landline).

If you require a translator to do this, call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on **131 450** and give them the telephone number listed above.