

Breastfeeding and your baby



Cracked and sore nipples

Breastfeeding should not be painful. If your nipple is sore, or you notice it is squashed, pale, ridged or flattened after a feed, the most likely cause is incorrect latch to the breast. Sometimes the skin on the nipple becomes so red and inflamed that it breaks.

This is known as a grazed or cracked nipple.

What causes cracked or sore nipples?

- Incorrect breastfeeding latch
- Infant with a tongue tie or another issue with the anatomy of the baby's mouth
- Infection or thrush on the nipple
- Mastitis
- Dermatitis or white spots on the nipple



How do I prevent cracked or sore nipples?

- Make sure your baby is positioned and attaching to your nipple correctly (see Positioning and Attachment fact sheet). Some initial discomfort may be expected when the baby is learning to latch but feeding should be comfortable when baby is deeply attached.
- Feed your baby when they are ready, looking for early feeding cues such as opening and closing their mouth, sucking on hands.
- Make sure your baby's suckling remains comfortable for you during the whole feed.
- To take your baby off the breast, break the suction with your finger at the corner of their mouth and put your finger over the nipple as they come off.
- Leave your bra off and allow your nipples to air dry after feeds.
- Avoid contact with nipple-damaging and drying agents (soaps, shampoos and detergent residue in clothes).
- If you are using breast pads, keep them dry and change them often.

What should I do if I think my nipple has cracked?

- Many of the prevention tips above are also useful to help heal a sore or cracked nipple/s.
- Apply a small amount of purified lanolin to your nipple/s after each breastfeed.
- Express a small amount of breast milk and apply to your nipple/s following a feed.
- Use breast pads or shells for comfort and healing and to protect tender nipples from clothing.
- Use a nipple shield when breastfeeding (see Nipple Shield fact sheet available through your Maternal and Child Health (MACH) nurse)
- If it is too painful to feed you may need to express your breast milk and give it to your baby with a syringe, cup or bottle.
- Seek health professional advice from a MACH Nurse, Lactation consultant, or GP. This may involve the health professional observing a breastfeed and providing support on the above suggestions.

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- If healing is slow or you feel you may have an infection in your nipple or feeding continues to be painful, please see your MACH Nurse or GP.

How do I treat nipple pain?

- Start the feed on the least sore side.
- Apply a warm water compress over your nipple after a feed until pain subsides, then apply breast milk or a small amount of purified lanolin to the nipple
- Take oral pain medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen following the instructions on the packaging
- Monitor breasts for lumpy areas and redness that may indicate the development of mastitis (see Mastitis fact sheet). If you suspect or develop mastitis you should see a doctor



What is a white spot or milk blister?

Occasionally you may notice a white spot on your sore nipple. This may be milk in a duct under a very fine layer of skin that has grown over a nipple pore. These are also called 'blebs'. These can go away on their own, however it can lead to an infection if left untreated.

What should I do if I notice this?

- Apply warm compress or a cotton ball/gauze soaked with olive oil to the affected area
- Breastfeed or use a breast pump following the warm compress/olive oil
- If the white spot is still there a doctor may need to remove skin from the duct
- Oral supplement called lecithin has been found to be helpful if recurrent white spots occur. Please see your GP to discuss.

How can I find more information?

Phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maternal and Child Health - Early Pregnancy and Parenting support line (02) 5124 1775, or• Central Health Intake (CHI) on (02) 5124 9977
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Breastfeeding Association - 1800 686 268 www.breastfeeding.asn.au• Pregnancy Birth and Baby - 1800 882 436 www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au• www.health.act.gov.au/breastfeeding
Visit	Your GP

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Acknowledgement of Country





Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. Canberra Health Services respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. Canberra Health Services also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.



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