

Mastitis

A Guide



Mastitis is caused by a bacterial infection in the breast tissues. It tends to occur after the first month of breastfeeding. If you have a sore or cut on your nipple, bacteria can enter and may cause the infection. Mothers with anemia or diabetes are more susceptible. Symptoms of Mastitis can come on suddenly and should be assessed by your healthcare provider as soon as possible to avoid worsening symptoms. There is a risk for developing an abscess if the symptoms go untreated.

Symptoms:

- Fever over 101° F and flu-like symptoms: fatigue, muscle aches, and chills
- Red streaks from the infection site
- Swelling or painful lump in one area
- Pus or blood in milk
- One breast may appear red, swollen, and feel hot. The other may appear normal. Very rarely are both breasts affected

Complementary Alternative Therapies:

It is important to keep breastfeeding or pumping on both sides so that your milk does not dry up. It is completely safe for your baby to nurse while you have mastitis. If you are breastfeeding and your baby is avoiding the side that is infected, try and pump that side. Keep Your Milk Moving!

Take care of yourself while your body is healing. Increase your rest, and increase the amount of water you're drinking each day. Make sure to change your nursing pads after each feeding to avoid infection.

Herbs and Supplements:

Echinacea is an immune boosting herb, which can help improve your body's defenses. This herb makes infection-fighting cells more active. It can be taken in capsules, as a tea, or a tincture. Follow dosing directions for the source of Echinacea.

Vitamin C can help support the immune system. Take 3000 mg every 4 hours. The dose can be decreased if any adverse effects are noticed, including diarrhea or upset stomach.

If you have mastitis due to recurrent plugged ducts try adding Lecithin to your diet. The usual recommended dosage for recurrent plugged ducts is 3600-4800 mg lecithin per day, or 1 capsule (1200 milligram) 3-4 times per day. You can begin to reduce the dosage after two weeks with out any plugs but if they return you may need to stay on a few capsules a day to prevent.

Probiotics:

Probiotics are beneficial microorganisms that have been shown to help decrease the inflammation in the breast. They can be bought in supplement form and taken orally. Look for probiotics that contain multiple Lactobacillus species such as L. acidophilus, L. fermentis and L. salivarius.

Homeopathy:

Belladonna 30 C for red or hot breasts. Four (4) pellets every 2 hours until symptoms subside

Phytolacca 30 C for plugged ducts that may be seen before full case of mastitis. Four (4) pellets every 2 hours

Prevention:

Explore with a breastfeeding specialist whether your baby's position while breastfeeding may be causing damage to the breast tissue. To prevent mastitis in the future, it is important to have your baby nursing without causing any damage or pain to your breasts. Prevent engorgement and plugged ducts by nursing regularly or pumping.

Important:

Follow your practitioner's recommendations and take prescribed medications, such as antibiotics, in addition to the suggestions above. Clearly communicate with your practitioner what complementary home remedies you are using. If you do not see any improvements in your symptoms within 1 to 3 days, seek additional help. Symptoms of mastitis that do not resolve can indicate other underlying conditions.

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