

## Blocked or Plugged Ducts

### What is it?

A plugged duct means that there is a blockage in a milk duct. The duct cannot allow the milk from one area of the breast to flow towards the nipple. This causes:

- A tender spot with localized redness or heat.
- A painful lump.
- Swelling in an area of your breast.

Sometimes milk producing cells in the breasts feel like lumps. These go away when you feed your baby. The lump from a blocked or plugged duct is different. It does not go away with breastfeeding. It usually affects only one breast. The blockage needs to be cleared or it may lead to mastitis.

### Causes of a Blocked or Plugged Duct

- Not removing enough milk from the breast due to baby's improper positioning or sucking.
- A sudden change in the number of feedings causing backup of milk.
- Breastfeeding from only one breast at a feeding.
- A bra or baby carrier that is too tight.
- Pressure from fingers, either yours or your baby's.
- Pressure from a purse or something else across an area of your breast.
- Fatigue, stress, or poor nutrition.



### What you can do?

- Breastfeed frequently, at least every two hours, beginning on the breast with the plugged duct. Begin all feedings at this breast until the lump and the pain are gone.
- Try nursing your baby in different positions to help remove milk from the breast.
- Gently, but firmly massage the breast just above the sore area while breastfeeding.
- Apply moist heat to the breast.
- Take a warm shower or bath and massage the sore breast to help the flow of milk.
- Drink more fluids.
- If the blockage is in the nipple, look for any dried milk on the nipple and soak it off with plain water.
- Remove your bra if it feels too tight.
- Make sure you rest when the baby is sleeping and ask other family members to help with household tasks and older children.
- Watch for signs of a breast infection also called mastitis: chills, fever, and achiness. If you have these signs, you should call your health care provider immediately. It is important to treat mastitis as quickly as possible.