



IABLE

Institute for the Advancement
of Breastfeeding & Lactation Education



Mastitis Prevention and Management

Mastitis is a general term for inflammation of the breast. A breast with mastitis has a painful, tender area of redness, oftentimes with swelling. Sometimes people with mastitis may notice fever, chills, headache, body aches and fatigue. Mastitis usually occurs because milk has not been removed from an area of the breast at the usual time. The milk producing tissue becomes too full, leading to a patch of swelling and inflammation. Sometimes the inflamed area can become infected, and antibiotics are needed.

What do I do if I have mastitis?

Many times, your symptoms can be resolved with some care at home to decrease the inflammation in your breast.

- Feed your baby on demand or pump on your usual schedule.
 - You should not pump extra or try to remove more milk than your baby needs.
- Promote lymphatic drainage through gentle lymphatic massage. Gentle lymphatic massage helps your body get rid of the swelling. Please see the [lymphatic drainage video](#).
 - Avoid deep massage of the breast tissue – this may damage your breast tissue, worsen symptoms, and can result in complications such as poor milk drainage and collections of fluid (galactoceles or abscesses).
- Wear a supportive bra.
- Use ice or ask your doctor about taking medicine (such as acetaminophen/Tylenol or Ibuprofen/Motrin).
- Avoid topical products such as saline soaks, castor oil, and other substances, as these can irritate the skin and will not address breast inflammation.
- Avoid nipple shields.

What if I'm not getting better?

If you try these methods and your symptoms are not improving within 24 hours, or you feel that you are rapidly worsening, you may have an infection and need antibiotics. Please call your physician for evaluation and treatment.

How can I prevent mastitis?

- Avoid pumping extra milk beyond what your baby needs, as this will raise milk production and increase the risk of breast swelling and inflammation.
- Continue a similar routine of milk removal by nursing or pumping around the same times each day.
- If you are pumping, keep your pump parts clean. Breast infections can occur from pump parts that are not cleaned after each use.
- Avoid nipple shields, as milk removal is often more difficult with these in place.

For more information visit the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine's information on mastitis:

<https://www.bfmed.org/parent-handouts>