

Mister Lactation Doctor

Plugged Ducts and How to Treat Them!

Plugged Ducts:

- At this time, we are unsure of the exact cause or why some women are more susceptible. The current belief is that plugged ducts are caused by a strong milk supply coupled with difficulties in adequately draining the breast.
- It will usually appear as a unilateral, tender, hard and possibly red area on the breast, with the 'plug' noted close to the nipple.
- It is typically most painful before feeds, when breasts are at their fullest.
- Relief is reported after feeds, but not a complete resolution of symptoms.
- If left untreated, plugged ducts can progress to mastitis (inflammation of the breast tissue) or a breast abscess.
- Plugged ducts are more common in the winter months (leading further credence to not wearing constrictive clothing).

Treatments:

- Frequent breastfeeding and/or pumping.
- Perform a lymphatic massage towards the nipple during feeds, and away from the nipple, towards the armpit, between feeds (You can watch a demonstration of the appropriate technique in my corresponding YouTube video).
- Position the infant so that their chin or nose is pointing towards the plug/painful area.
- Apply heat to the affected area.
- You can trial hand expressing in a warm shower/while crouched over a basin of warm water, massaging the affected area.

- Avoid underwire bras or constricting clothing.
- Use ibuprofen/advil, as needed, if you have no contraindications to this medication.
- For individuals with recurrent plugged ducts, there is some evidence that taking lecithin will help prevent formation of a plugged duct. It is a fat extract from plants. Some stomach upset may occur, but lecithin is usually well tolerated, assuming you have no allergies or contraindications to taking it. Contact your primary care physician or pharmacist for further information.

Be certain to monitor for worsening of symptoms or development of systemic systems (fever, chills, etc.), as this could indicate a brewing mastitis. Seek immediate medical attention if these symptoms arise or if you have any other changes in your disposition.

Always remember, you are doing a wonderful job!

Take care,



Mister Lactation Doctor
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