Preventing sore nipples

Breastfeeding is meant to be a comfortable, rewarding experience for you and your baby. Some women report some nipple tenderness the first few days, but this should disappear within 1 to 2 weeks.

There are some basic things that will help you to avoid having sore nipples after that.

- Find breastfeeding positions that work well for you.
- Work with your baby to get a deep latch for feeding.
- Do not use soap on your nipples when washing.

Reasons for sore nipples

There may be different reasons for sore nipples, including:

- Baby not latching on well or has a shallow latch.
- Baby not positioned well during feeding.
- Breasts engorged or not being emptied often.
- Your nipples are flat or inverted (turned inward).
- Removing baby from the breast before breaking the suction (latch).
- Breast pump not used the right way.

If your nipples are cracked, bleeding, bruised, or blistered, have them checked by a lactation consultant.

Treating sore nipples

Your first step is to figure out why they are getting sore. Here are some things to try.

- Make sure that your baby is latched on well, so the nipple goes deeply into the baby’s mouth. This will protect the nipple from more damage.
- Always use your finger in the corner of your baby’s mouth to gently break the suction before taking baby off of the breast.
- Breastfeed often (every 1½ to 3 hours for 8 to 12 feedings a day) to prevent engorgement.
- Vary nursing positions to change the baby’s positions on the nipple.
- Hand express milk onto your nipples before and after feedings.
- After feeding, allow the nipples to air dry.
- Apply a pea-size amount of ultra-pure, modified lanolin by gently patting the nipples. This also treats dry skin on the nipple and areola. Ask a lactation consultant about other products options.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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