Prevention and Treatment of 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 one to two weeks.

Reasons for Sore Nipples

There are many reasons why you may have sore nipples:

- Incorrect latch on or positioning when breastfeeding. Correct latch on or positioning will help soreness go away.
- Breast engorgement or breasts not being emptied often.
- Flat or inverted nipples.
- Removing baby from the breast before suction is released.
- Improper use of a breast pump.

Nipples that are cracked, bleeding, bruised or blistered are not normal and should be checked by a lactation consultant.

Treatment of Sore Nipples

- Identify the cause of sore nipples. Make sure that your baby is latched on well so that the nipple goes deeply into the baby’s mouth. This will protect the nipple from further damage.

More on next page ➔
• Detach your baby carefully off of the breast when feeding is finished. Gently use your finger in the corner of your baby’s mouth to break suction off the breast.

• Breastfeed often (every 1½ to 3 hours for 8 to 12 feedings a day) to reduce engorgement.

• Vary nursing positions so the baby’s positions on the nipple are changed.

• Express colostrum or 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 will also treat dry skin on the nipple and areola.

For More Information

Call the Breastfeeding Helpline at (614) 293-8910 if nipple soreness persists or if you have any questions.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.