

Sore Nipples

Sore nipples may be caused by:

- Your baby not latching on properly.
- Your baby not sucking properly.
- Improper breast care (such as soap on your nipples, which can cause irritated skin).
- Pumping with the wrong size breast shield.
- Pumping with the suction too strong.

Before feeding:

- Wash your hands
- Make yourself comfortable and relax
- Express a small amount of breast milk by hand or pump to soften the areola (darker part of your breast around the nipple) and to stimulate the milk to come before your baby begins to nurse
- Offer the breast that is least sore first. Babies suck the strongest at the beginning of the feeding to help your milk let down
- Make sure your baby is positioned correctly and you are supporting your breast
- Wait for your baby to open wide before latching. Make sure the baby can latch on to as much of the nipple and breast as possible. If the latch is painful, re-latch and try to get baby on deeper

During feeding:

- Change the position of your baby at each feeding (cradle, side-sitting, lying down, football).
- Breastfeed often - at least every 2 to 3 hours for 10-15 minutes.
- When removing your baby from the breast, gently break the suction by inserting your finger between the baby's gums and your breast. You should be able to hear the suction release.

Before Pumping:

- Wash your hands
- Make yourself comfortable and relax
- Properly center the breast shield on your nipples
- Decrease the amount of suction on the breast pump until your nipples heal. Once nipples are healed, keep at comfortable suction
- You may use a small amount of lanolin ointment, coconut oil, or olive oil on the inside of the breast shield for comfort

After Pumping or Feeding:

- Apply breast milk to nipples and allow to air dry
- Apply a small amount of lanolin or nipple cream to nipples
- Lanolin and other nipple creams do not need to be washed off before the next pumping or feeding. If you use breast pads, be sure they are not made of plastic
- Use a fresh breast pad after each pumping or feeding

Call your doctor, nurse, or the Children's Mercy Hospital Breastfeeding and Pumping helpline at (816) 346-1309 if:

- Your nipple pain is severe, or you have cracked bleeding nipples
- You still have sore nipples after 24-48 hours following the measures above
- You have questions or concerns

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