

Sore Nipples in the Breastfeeding Mother

Tender and sensitive nipples are normal as you begin breastfeeding your new baby. However, very sore, cracked or bleeding nipples are not. Usually this problem is related to the way your baby latches-on to the breast. It is important that your baby get a big "mouthful" of the nipple and areola. Whether you hold your baby across your chest in a cross-cradle hold or at your side in a football hold, turn your baby onto his side and hold him so his mouth is directly in front of the breast near the nipple.

Positioning

Position your baby with pillows so he is breast height. This reduces strain on your nipple and prevents soreness.

Roll the baby completely on his side so he is "belly to belly" with you. This also reduces nipple strain and soreness.

A cross-cradle hold or football hold works best to achieve a good latch-on with a newborn. Position your baby with his nose to your nipple so he has to reach "up" slightly to reach the nipple.



Latch-on

Compress your areola slightly to make a "nipple sandwich" for the baby. This will allow the baby to get a deeper latch-on.



Be sure to stroke his lips with your nipple and pull him quickly to the breast when he opens his mouth wide. Wait for his mouth to open WIDE and his tongue to come forward. Then pull him to the breast so he gets a good mouthful of the areola (the dark brown part of the breast) in his mouth.

Look for these 4 things:

The angle of your baby's lips at the breast is greater than 140°

Most of the areola is in your baby's mouth. 1" from the base of your nipple, more near the baby's lower lip than the top.

You feel deep pulling sensation as the baby nurses. It should not be sharp pain or last more than a moment during the latch-on.

Listen for swallowing every 3 to 5 sucks after your milk comes in

Heal your nipples

Vary the position you hold your baby in at each feeding. Try cross-cradle hold one time and football hold the next time.

Use a light application of purified lanolin. A little of your own breastmilk works well too. Massage it into the nipple and areola.

If your breasts are very full and engorged, try to hand express a little milk or use a breast pump before the baby latches-on. This will make the nipple more graspable.

Breast shells may help during the healing process. Shells promote the circulation of air around the nipples and keep and pressure of the bra off the nipples. A combination of lanolin and breast shells is one the fastest ways to promote healing.

Hydrogel dressings may be helpful if you have broken skin on the nipple. They help promote moist wound healing which is thought to speed the healing process. Check with a knowledgeable health care professional to determine if these are appropriate for your situation.

These measures may help you resolve uncomplicated problems with sore nipples. There are circumstances where sore nipples indicate a more severe problem. Please seek help if your problem does not resolve quickly.

Please be aware that the information provided is intended solely for general educational and informational purposes only. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician for any questions you may have regarding your or your infant's medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have received in this information.

