

Blocked or Plugged Milk Duct

A plugged milk duct shows up as a painful, swollen, firm mass in your breast with slight redness to the skin. Sometimes a white plug or spot can be seen on the nipple.



What to do

- Breastfeed, express or pump your breasts every three to four hours, day and night. Plugged ducts often appear when your baby starts to sleep for a long time at night.
 - Warm moist heat (warm water) may give you comfort and may help your milk flow better. You can massage your breast in the shower or soak the tender breast in the bath or by leaning over a basin of warm water.
 - While soaking your breast, apply firm pressure and massage the tender area towards the nipple. You may see expressed milk coming out as a solid - this looks like a string and it means you are starting to remove the sticky milk inside that is causing the blocked duct. Continue to apply firm pressure while soaking your breasts in warm water.
 - Repeat this 3-4 times per day as needed until the blocked duct resolves, usually 1-2 days.
- Position your baby so that his or her chin is pointing towards the plugged area when latched at the breast. Try using some different feeding positions throughout the day to prevent further blocked areas.
 - Avoid tight clothing, such as an underwire bra or straps of a baby carrier.
 - Your condition will likely improve within 24-48 hours.
 - Rest as much as possible during this time.
 - Drink lots of fluids.
 - Ultrasound treatments at a physiotherapy clinic are helpful as well. See <http://www.nbc.ca>
 - Lecithin is a food supplement that may help to prevent recurring blocked ducts by decreasing the stickiness of the milk. The dose is 1200mg four times a day.

A plugged duct can progress to mastitis. If you develop a fever, chills, flu-like aching, or redness and pain in your breast, see your healthcare provider.

Talk with a Public Health Nurse, call Client and Community Support 1-800-265-7293 ext 7006