

CLOGGED DUCTS AND MASTITIS

A Self-Care Guide

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NURSE

I know it is uncomfortable, but if you are nursing your baby keep nursing! Aim to feed your baby 85% of the time on that side. Feel free to self massage and Epsom salt soak before and after, but rinse off the salt before latching your baby. If you are weaning, stick a cold cabbage leaf in your bra. For real, I know it sounds weird but it helps.

PUMP

Pump after nursing. Also make sure you pump on the opposite side to prevent any clogs on the healthy side while you are working to heal the painful side. Aim for multiple 15 minute pumping sessions, but keep the settings at the same levels as you normally would.

EPSOM SALT SOAK/ HOT COMPRESS

This one can be awkward so go somewhere where drips don't matter. Fill a metal bowl hot water and 1-2 cups of Epsom salts. Lean forward to soak breast tissue. In Chinese medicine salt softens masses, so if you can't figure out how to soak, grab a washcloth and use the salty water as a compress where your clog is.

ACUPUNCTURE OR ACUPRESSURE

There are acupuncture points specifically for mastitis! If you can't make an appointment with a licensed provider in your area, you can do self acupressure and firm self massage at the following points: SI1, SI11, ST 15, ST16, ST 18, and ST39. Images of where these points are located can be found at www.askacupuncture.com

SELF MASSAGE

Milk ducts don't just go from breast tissue in a straight line toward the nipple, so start where the clog is and circle out as though you are doing the monthly self breast exam for breast cancer screening. Be gentle with yourself, and only do as much pressure as it takes to be unpleasant rather than full on painful

TOPICAL MASTITIS OINTMENT

A reputable Chinese herb company located in Portland, OR makes a mastitis ointment which you can apply for topical relief. You need an acupuncture license to order it directly from them but it is also available for sale at www.askacupuncture.com and it makes a big difference.

WHEN TO GO TO THE DOCTOR

If you develop a fever or your symptoms don't start to improve within 24 hours of onset and trying these techniques, call your doctor! Mastitis can get very serious very quickly and it is often recommended to treat with antibiotics and rest.

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