PREVENTING & MANAGING MASTITIS

by Matrescence OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Treehouse Pediatrics

WHAT IS MASTITIS?

Mastitis is a condition caused by swelling of the breast tissue. It is common among breastfeeding or pumping parents and can lead to discomfort and additional problems if not managed properly. Mastitis includes a range of conditions.

WHAT CAUSES MASTITIS?

Mastitis happens when tissue around the milk ducts become swollen for a variety of reasons:

- Milk ducts can narrow due to swelling and pressure around them, causing milk to back up and thicken.
- Overproduction of milk can lead to too much milk in the breast at one time.
- Bacteria can enter the milk ducts and may lead to infection.
- Aggressive breast massage or other forms of trauma can worsen swelling.

TYPES OF MASTITIS

- **Ductal Narrowing and Inflammatory Mastitis:** This type involves swelling without infection, often due to an oversupply.
- **Bacterial Mastitis:** This occurs when a bacterial infection develops in the swollen milk ducts.
- **Phlegmon and Abscess**: These are more severe conditions where the infection spreads, potentially leading to a collection of trapped pus or fluid and may need to be drained by a doctor.
- **Galactocele:** This is a milk-filled cyst that can develop from milk sitting in the breast for a long period of time and may become infected.

SYMPTOMS OF MASTITIS

- **Pain and Swelling:** The affected breast area may become painful, swollen, and red.
- **Fever and Flu-like Symptoms:** These are common in bacterial mastitis.
- **Lumps and Tenderness:** You may feel tender or painful lumps in your breast.
- **Redness:** The skin on your breast may look red or shiny in parts.

- Continue breastfeeding or pumping to keep your milk flowing.
- Use gentle techniques like hand expression or reverse pressure softening to help your baby get a deep latch and improve milk flow.
- If you are pumping, make sure you are using a comfortable and fitted flange and set suction at a tolerable level.
- Use Comfort Measures
  - Apply ice packs, cool or cold compresses to reduce swelling and pain.
  - Over-the-counter pain relief like ibuprofen or acetaminophen or naturally anti-inflammatory foods or herbs may help with pain and swelling.
  - Warm showers might help ease discomfort temporarily, although heat may make some symptoms worse.
  - Get rest and focus on feeding your baby or pumping and healing.
- **When to see a doctor:**
  - If symptoms do not improve within 48 hours of home care.
  - If you develop an abscess, which may require drainage.
  - For bacterial mastitis, antibiotics like dicloxacillin or cephalexin are often prescribed.
  - Always complete the full course of antibiotics as directed by your healthcare provider.

Preventing Mastitis

- Make sure your baby's latch or your pump is comfortable and removes milk effectively.
- Breastfeed when your baby is hungry
- Avoid excessive pumping, which can lead to overproduction and milk staying in the breast for long period of time.
- Avoid aggressive breast massage and applying heat directly to breasts

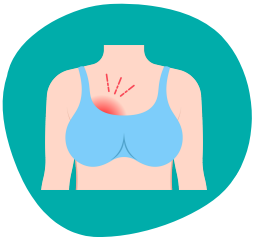
MANAGING MASTITIS

ANTIBIOTICS
may be required if symptoms have not gotten better after 24 hours

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR
Especially if you develop an abscess or symptoms that are not resolving after 24-58 hours

WEAR A SUPPORTIVE, WELL-FITTING BRA
but avoid a tight underwire bra or clothing that may put pressure on breasts

USE COOL OR COLD COMPRESSES



CONSIDER ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES

BREASTFEED ON DEMAND OR PUMP
only as much as your baby needs in a days

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