

***Herzl Family Practice Centre, Goldfarb Breastfeeding Clinic***

**Blocked ducts  
Patient Handout**

**What is a blocked duct?**

When a milk duct is clogged so that milk can't flow freely, causing a lump or thread of firm area in the breast it is called a blocked duct. The exact cause is unknown.

- Blocked ducts are tender and painful lumpy areas in the breast
- The skin around the lumpy area may be red and warm to touch.
- Your breast may feel firm or swollen in that area.
- You generally feel well.
- You usually do not have a fever or if you do it is mild (i.e. less than 38.4° C or 101° F)
- You may notice a sometimes painful small white dot on your nipple (milk bleb).

**Risk factors for blocked ducts:**

You may be more at risk of having blocked ducts if:

- Your breasts are not drained well, such as with a poor latch.
- You have irregular, shorter or skipped feeds.
- You have an abundance or over production of breastmilk.
- You have persistent or recurring pressure on the breasts in the same area such as with a tight or ill-fitted bra, back-pack/purse, baby carrier or tight seat-belt.

**What to do for blocked ducts:**

- Continue nursing your baby often day and night (or pumping) and try the following:
  - Ensure baby is nursing in a good position and latches well. You should not feel any pain.
  - Change nursing positions to sometimes have **baby's nose or chin** pointing towards the blockage.

- Apply **heat** and massage breasts before breastfeeding/pumping.
  - **Gently massage** the breast lump while breastfeeding/pumping.
  - Apply cold compresses after breastfeeding/pumping (ice pack, bag of frozen peas).
  - Wear comfortable clothes and make sure your bra is not too tight.
- Soak breasts in hot tap water and **Epsom Salts**:
    - Fill sink or large bowl with 4 litres of hot water.
    - Add a handful (2 tablespoons or 30 ml) of Epsom Salts.
    - Submerge breasts for about 10 minutes before each feed for 24 hours.
    - You can gently massage the blocked area while it is soaking (starting closer to the nipple and moving up the breast).
    - Rinse with fresh water before nursing, as baby may not like the salty taste.
    - Nurse baby soon after soaking.

**\*\*If you don't have time to submerge your breasts before each feed, then you can sit in a hot bath with a cup of Epsom Salts for about 10 – 20 minutes, rinse off, then nurse your baby.**

- You may want to limit your consumption of fats (deep fried foods, potato chips, etc) and add **lecithin** to your diet:
  - 1 tablespoon/day of lecithin or 1 lecithin capsule (1200 mg) 3-4 times per day may be helpful to decrease blocked ducts.
  - Lecithin could make you feel depressed especially if you have a history of depression in the past. Please discuss this with your physician.
- **Curcuma** paste or cream
- The following supplements can also be useful: Vitamin B complex, Vitamin C, evening primrose oil, and specific probiotics like L-fermentum and L-salivarius.
- If you have repetitive blocked ducts, we sometimes suggest **ultrasound therapy** or **lymphatic drainage**. Ask us for a referral if needed.

Generally when the blockage is gone and milk is flowing all the symptoms go away. Blocked ducts can last a couple of days and should improve with treatment.

If you do not feel better in 2 -3 days or if symptoms worsen, contact your health professional.

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