



What is Mastitis?

Mastitis occurs when areas of the breast become inflamed or infected, which can lead to pain, redness, swelling, and/or limited milk flow. Plugged ducts can precede mastitis when a small area is inflamed and limits proper drainage of milk.

What causes it?

It is commonly caused by overproduction of milk, obstruction of milk flow, or a change in the normal healthy bacteria composition in the milk ducts.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain, redness, swelling, and hardened areas of the breast.
- Decreased milk production.
- Fever, body aches, and fatigue.

How is it treated?

Many cases of mastitis do not need antibiotics. If it is recognized and treated early, antibiotics may be avoided.

- Continue to feed your baby normally, including from the affected breast. You should feed and/or pump at your usual rate. Do not increase the rate of breast emptying, as this will increase your supply and worsen the problem.
- Cool compresses can soothe and decrease inflammation. Warm compresses prior to feeding or pumping may also soothe and help milk flow during emptying.
- To decrease inflammation, gently stroke the breast from the affected area toward the armpit. Avoid deep massage or commercial vibrating massage devices.
- Ibuprofen 800mg every 8 hours (with food) or Tylenol 1000mg every 8 hours can decrease pain and inflammation.

If you are not improving in 24 hours, your physician may prescribe antibiotics. Complete the entire course as prescribed. If there is no improvement 24 hours after starting antibiotics, call your doctor. If you have mastitis caused by overproduction of milk, discuss with your doctor how to effectively reduce your production to meet your baby's needs.

