

# BLOCKED DUCTS + MASTITIS

Physiotherapy and Self-Management Strategies



## WHAT IS A BLOCKED DUCT?

A blocked duct is an area or segment of the breast tissue where milk flow is obstructed causing a tender lump or spot in the breast.

## WHAT IS MASTITIS?

Mastitis is inflammation of the breast tissue which is usually caused by a blocked milk duct that hasn't cleared, or a damaged nipple. Mastitis may result in an infection within the blocked duct.

## SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a blocked duct typically involve:

- A reddened area of the breast which becomes tender, hard and painful
- Occasionally, there can be localised tenderness or pain without an obvious lump
- Low grade fever

A blocked duct can progress to mastitis and will involve progressively worsening and intense pain, heat and swelling in the affected breast. There are typically additional flu-like symptoms with mastitis, such as joint aches, pains and lethargy.

## TREATMENT FOR BLOCKED DUCTS + MASTITIS

- 1 Feed from the affected breast whilst massaging the lump towards the nipple. Try to increase frequency of feeding from the affected breast.
- 2 When feeding, try ensure the babies chin is pointed to the area of hardness to help drain the blocked duct
- 3 Apply heat to the affected area before breast feeding or for symptomatic relief
- 4 Self-massaging the lump towards the nipple when in the shower
- 5 Therapeutic ultrasound delivered by your Women's Health Physiotherapist – typically a few sessions close together can help to resolve symptoms.

## MEDICATION

Non-steroidal anti inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen will also aid in reducing the pain and inflammation in the affected breast tissue. Paracetamol can also be taken in conjunction with ibuprofen.

In moderate cases of mastitis, antibiotics may be required if there is an active infection and your symptoms have not resolved. If the above treatment methods have not improved your symptoms or you are experiencing significant pain or intense flu-symptoms, please contact your General Practitioner.

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