



Mastitis

What is Mastitis?

Mastitis is a general word that describes a breast infection. There are two main types of mastitis: toxic mastitis and localized mastitis.

How do I know if I have toxic mastitis?

With a toxic mastitis, you will feel very ill, dizzy, weak or flu-like. The breast suddenly becomes very painful or tender in one or more areas. The breast usually develops red areas and may be slightly more firm under the red areas.

What should I do when I get a toxic mastitis?

The treatment for this is oral antibiotics, continuing to nurse, and massaging any extra milk out of the breast. Acetaminophen or anti-inflammatories can also help with pain and fever.

Antibiotic pills such as cephalexin, cloxacillin and clindamycin will help you get better quickly and will reduce the chances of you getting an abscess. All of these antibiotics are considered safe to use in breastfeeding.

You will need to continue nursing. This will help you get better faster and decrease the risk of getting a breast abscess. Do not be afraid that nursing will harm the baby. Mothers and babies share bacteria right from birth. By stopping breastfeeding, you deny the baby the protection from infection offered in breast milk.

After feeds, ensure that the breast is being emptied by massaging extra milk out of the breast. Coat your fingertips with cooking or baby oil. Place the pads of your fingers behind the problem area and gently slide toward the nipple. Press firmly, but not so hard as to cause pain. Some mothers will try to pump after feeding baby. The pump is generally not as effective as massaging.



What does a localized mastitis feel like?

You will not feel ill and will not have a fever. Your breast can look the same as with a toxic mastitis; that is, red, sore and hot.

What should I do when I get a localized mastitis?

The same as with a toxic mastitis, except for starting antibiotics. If you are not better in 24 hours or if you go on to get a fever or feel ill, start antibiotics at that point. Also, if you have any nipple damage, the mastitis is probably due to the nipple damage getting infected and you should start antibiotics.

What can I do to prevent this?

Nipple cracks, changes in nursing patterns, a large milk supply and diabetes will predispose you to mastitis. Any woman who has had mastitis is at an increased risk of developing another episode. Toxic mastitis comes on very quickly and I advise patients to keep a prescription or the actual pills at home in case of an episode.

Should I come in to the Clinic?

You should see us as soon as you can after you get mastitis.

How soon should I get better?

Mastitis develops quickly but also clears quickly. Expect to be feeling better within two days.

What is an abscess?

An abscess is a collection of pus in the breast. It feels like a lump in the breast that does not change with nursing. It is usually tender with redness on the overlying skin. The pus must be removed. This is best done with a needle and local anesthetic. Occasionally,

this might need to be repeated. In olden times, the breast was cut open and cotton packing was put into the breast.