

How to Care for Severe Nipple Damage

Breastfeeding is not supposed to be painful!

- Correct the cause. Nipple damage is almost always a result of a latch problem. If nipples are too painful to continue breastfeeding rest nipples by pumping (see Pumping handout) and work with your lactation consultant to correct your baby's position at the breast.
- It's fine to wash your nipples with mild soap and water in your daily shower. This will remove debris and promote healing.
- If deeply damaged you may want to rinse nipples with plain water after each breastfeed to remove baby's saliva and the bacteria this contains. Pat dry and immediately apply Polysporin or Bacitracin (these are over-the-counter topical antibiotics). Do not use Neosporin. Apply the ointment thickly to promote what is known as "moist wound healing." This is very appropriate for nipple damage.
- Use the ointment after all pump or breastfeeding sessions. Dab away excess prior to next breastfeeding. You don't need to remove the ointment before pumping as it will not wash into the milk, and will act as a barrier to protect your skin from chafing against the pump flange.
- Discontinue the antibiotic ointment once your nipples no longer looks abraded or raw – no more than 3 days. Often you will see improvement in 24 hours. You can then switch to an ointment designed for nipple care, such as Motherlove Nipple Cream, Lansinoh or similar, until your nipples no longer feel sensitive. At this stage some mothers find Silverette cups helpful.
- Nipples damaged by latching issues typically are much improved in just a few days with corrected latch, or pumping to rest them. If your nipples are not healing rapidly please ask your OB or PCP for advice. Sometimes a prescription for All Purpose Nipple Ointment can be helpful, or a referral to dermatology especially if you have a history of skin problems.
- It may help to use a breast shell under your bra so your nipple can heal everted, not flattened.

Here are some more ideas and greater detail:

<https://kellymom.com/bf/concerns/mother/nipplehealing/>