
Breastfeeding should not hurt. If your breasts are more than a little tender in the first few days, something may be wrong. Talk with a lactation consultant about how to fix sore nipples.

What causes sore nipples?

Sore nipples are most often caused by poor positioning. This may include:

- The way you hold your baby.
- The way you hold your breast.
- The way your baby holds their mouth or latches onto the breast.
- Pump flanges that are the wrong size for your breasts.
- Incorrect use of pump settings.

Sore nipples are often easy to fix. Ask your baby's nurse to call the lactation consultant for you.

What is the treatment?

Some helpful ways to decrease nipple soreness include:

- Make sure your baby opens their mouth wide before they latch on.
- Make sure your baby latches on behind the nipple, not the end of the nipple. Part or all of the areola should be in your baby's mouth. The areola is the dark area around the nipple.
- Support your breast with your hand during the entire feeding.
- Slide your finger into your baby's mouth to break the suction before removing them from the breast.
- Keep your fingernails short to help avoid scratching your baby.
- After breastfeeding, put a few drops of expressed breast milk on your nipple area. Allow milk to air dry.
- If your nipples are cracked or bleeding, talk with a lactation consultant.
 - Wash your nipples with soap and water 2 times each day.
 - Use a nipple ointment, such as modified lanolin. Put a small amount on your nipples after breastfeeding.
 - There is no need to wash your nipples before you breastfeed again.
- If breastfeeding is too painful:
 - Express your milk by hand or with a pump until you are able to breastfeed again.
 - Ask your baby's nurse for a breast pump to use, and ask the nurse to call the lactation consultant for you.
- Make sure you are using the correct pump flange size for your nipples.
 - Your nipple should fit inside the tunnel and move freely when the pump is turned on.
 - The flange may be too small if your nipple rubs against the side.
 - The flange may be too big if your areola or breast is also pulled into the tunnel.
 - Ask your baby's nurse to call the lactation consultant if you think you need a different pump flange size.

NOTE: The expressed breast milk and modified lanolin can only help your nipples heal if your baby's position is correct when you feed them. If you have a problem with positioning, the sore nipples may not go away.

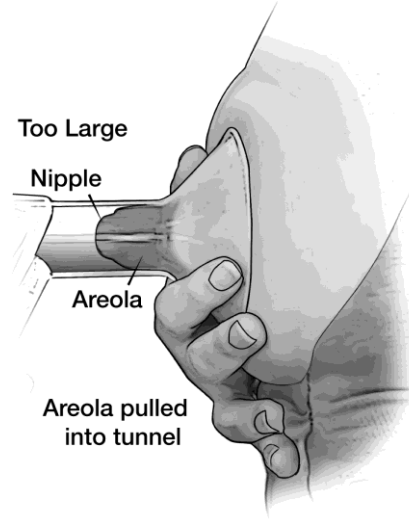
In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Sore nipples, continued

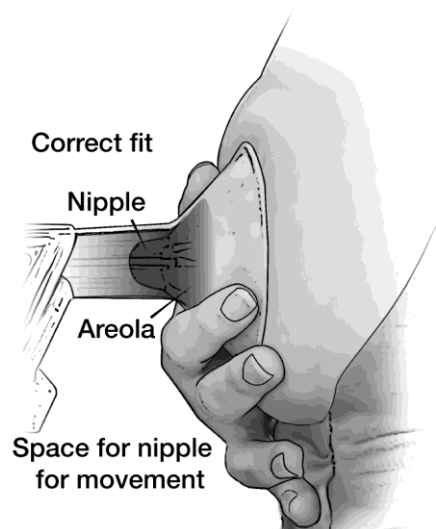
Too small



Too large



Correct fit



When should I call the doctor?

If you have sore nipples all of a sudden after weeks of breastfeeding, it may be caused by yeast or an infection. Call your doctor if the problem is not caused by positioning.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.