

## Mastitis Information Leaflet For Breastfeeding Mothers

### **What is Mastitis and why does it happen?**

Mastitis is an inflammation of the breast that is caused by milk stasis which can lead to a blocked milk duct, and if left untreated will become infected. Milk stasis means collection of milk particularly in one spot which can be caused by following.

### **Causes**

- Baby not properly attached to the breast during feeding, which may mean that enough milk is not removed by the baby during a feed.
- Poor attachment at the breast can cause nipple pain and cracked nipples and it opens a route for the bacteria on the skin to get inside of the breast.
- Infrequent feeds or missing feeds, for example, when a baby starts to sleep through the night
- Baby having a preference for one breast during feeds; this can lead to milk stasis developing in the other breast
- Pressure on your breast, for example, from tight-fitting clothing, an over-restrictive bra, sleeping on your front or pressing on the breast with a finger during feeding.
- Sucking problems, for example, tongue-tie (a piece of skin between the underside of their tongue and the floor of their mouth) preventing effective milking of the breast

### **Signs and Symptoms**

One or more of these signs/ symptoms may be seen:

- A lumpy area on the breast which is not softening after a feeding
- A red, wedge shaped painful area on the breast
- Flu like symptoms- feeling hot and cold with or without painful joints.

## Self Help Measures

- The infection clears more quickly with frequent breastfeeding. Rest in bed with the baby, breastfeeding on demand, change positions for feeding.
- Apply warm compresses to the breast pre feeding and massage the affected area. Ensure that the breast feels softer following a feed. Hand expression may be helpful.
- Cold compresses are soothing to the breast following a feed.
- Paracetamol 1 gr QDS (four time daily) and/or Ibuprofen 400 mgs tds (three times daily) will reduce pain, temperature and inflammation. (Ensure you do not have an allergy/contraindication to these medications).
- Drink plenty of fluids.

## What is the treatment for mastitis?

Not all mastitis requires a course of antibiotic treatment, but antibiotic treatment may be required if self-help measures are not providing improvement within a few days. Contact your GP or doctor. A breast milk sample is indicated following two episodes of mastitis. Most antibiotics are safe to take whilst breastfeeding but ensure your doctor is aware you are still breastfeeding.

Consider the following points:

- Finish the course of antibiotics
- Take regular pain relief
- Do not discontinue breastfeeding
- Avoid unnecessary visitors until you feel better and recover.
- Make an appointment with Public Health Nurse/ Community Lactation Consultant or Hospital Clinic to support you with your breastfeeding.