



# Common breastfeeding concerns

## Common early problems – tender or cracked nipples

### Remember...

- Some nipple tenderness is normal the first few times you breastfeed.
- After this time, incorrect attachment is the most common cause of tender and cracked nipples.
- If your nipples are cracked, contact a breastfeeding trained health professional for help.
- If breastfeeding is too painful, avoid feeding on the sore breast for 12–24 hours. Instead, express milk by hand and feed to your baby in a bottle or cup.
- Help your nipples heal by:
  - removing breast pads
  - rubbing expressed breastmilk into them after feeds
  - letting them air dry.

### Tender nipples

Some nipple tenderness is normal at the start of feeds in the first 1–2 weeks. After these early days, incorrect attachment is the most common cause of nipple pain.

### Tips

- Wash hands well before feeding.
- If you are using breast pads, change them when they are wet.
- Avoid using drying agents (eg. soap) on nipples.
- When you need to take your baby off your breast, do it carefully by breaking the suction with your little finger in the corner of your baby's mouth.
- Expose your nipples to the air after each feed.
- Allow breastmilk to dry on your nipples after each feed as it has properties that protect against infection.

### Cracked nipples

#### Tips

- Seek assistance from an ABA counselor or a breastfeeding trained health professional.
- Poor attachment is the most common cause of cracked nipples.
- Follow suggestions on this fact sheet for tender nipples.
- If it is too painful to breastfeed, avoid feeding on the sore breast (for 12–24 hours) but express milk during this period.
- Express milk by hand and feed the milk to your baby in a bottle or cup.
- Gently remove breast pads to stop further damage to your nipples. If the pad sticks to the breast, express a little breastmilk to moisten it before trying to remove it again.
- Put expressed breastmilk on nipples following feeds to promote healing.
- Let your nipples air dry naturally.
- Research suggests the use of nipple creams is ineffective in most cases.

### Acknowledgements

This fact sheet is consistent with current Infant Feeding Guidelines and Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, as produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

It is also based on information drawn heavily from:

- Infant and Toddler Feeding Guide, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Breastfeeding: A Simple Guide to Help You Establish Breastfeeding, Community Child Health Service, Royal Children's Hospital and Health Service District, 2004.
- Growing Strong: Feeding You and Your Baby, Public Health Services, Queensland Health, 2003.
- Optimal Infant Nutrition: Evidence Based Guidelines 2003-2008, Queensland Health, 2003.

This fact sheet is also the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

