

## Treating a Blocked Duct

When there is a decreased flow of milk from one area of the breast, it can cause milk to build up in a milk duct. This causes a stasis of the milk solids which blocks further milk flow. A blocked milk duct is usually sore and swollen and is usually felt as a lump under the skin. It may come on gradually. Sometimes a small white blister or plug may be seen on the tip of the nipple. Some mothers feel a shooting pain in the breast to the nipple. A plugged duct must be treated IMMEDIATELY to avoid a breast infection. If treated aggressively, it will clear quickly.

### What to Do:

- Apply hot compresses to the area. Use a hot facecloth/towel, or pour hot water into a disposable newborn diaper and wring out the excess. This hot compress can be re-heated in the microwave. Be careful it is not too hot.
- Stand in a hot shower and hand express to promote drainage.
- Massage the breast firmly using warm oil, from behind the lump toward the nipple area with the fingertips and then the flat of the hand.
- Encourage the baby to nurse longer and more frequently, particularly on the affected breast.
- Change the baby's nursing position to encourage proper drainage. Check for proper positioning and any finger pressure on milk ducts.
- Support breast from underneath if heavy.
- Avoid tight or restricting clothing. Check that your bra is fitting properly.
- A raw potato poultice will draw out the heat of inflammation, localize the infection and unblock plugged ducts. Apply directly to the affected area, cover with a clean cloth and change when dry.
- There are some effective homeopathic remedies for plugged ducts.
- Call your midwife if the lump persists.

If you start feeling unwell, develop a fever, the lump feels hot to touch, or you notice red streaks on the breast please call your midwife immediately.