Sore Nipples

The best way to keep your nipples healthy during breastfeeding is to follow these best practices:

• Learn and watch for early feeding cues – baby will not suck as hard if you nurse him before he gets really hungry.

• Hold your baby close, nose to nipple. Place your baby so he does not have to turn his head to reach your breast.

• Massage your breasts before feeding – this will help your milk flow for your baby.

• Make sure your baby has both the nipple and the lower part of the areola in his mouth. Your baby should have a mouth full of breast.

• Try different feeding positions and change feeding positions often.

• If you are sore, start the feeding with the less painful breast.

• To speed healing, rub some expressed breastmilk on the sore area after feeding and let your nipple air dry - breastmilk helps fight infections.

• Avoid using soap or cream on your nipples.

• If using nursing pads, change them between feedings to keep your breasts dry.

• Wear cotton bras and clothing.

• Avoid wearing bras and other clothing that is tight and puts pressure on your breasts.

• Ask for help before trying medicinal creams, gel pads, or a nipple shield – they usually cause more problems.

• Contact your health care provider for persistent sore nipples and call the 24-Hour Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-800-833-4642 to help overcome painful nipples.

Information adapted from New York State Public Health Department, breastfeedingpartners.org.