

## Healing damaged nipples

1. Wash your hands carefully to avoid bugs getting in from under your fingernails
2. After feeds, wash your nipples with water
3. Air dry them for a few minutes
4. Apply a little cream (eg lanolin or kawa kawa balm)
5. Protect the nipples from being squashed – shaping a breast pad can help

### WASH / DRY / CREAM / COVER

This is a lot of work, but you should only need to do it for a few days.

In summary



## NIPPLE CARE

After a feed, clean nipples well with warm water



Air dry or pat dry



Apply a small dot of cream



Cover with cone shaped breast pad, so nipple doesn't squash



Vaseline, Olive oil, Coconut oil, and Breastmilk left to dry, are other good options. Always use creams sparingly as they can make latching tricky, and may increase the risk of thrush

You can also loosen your bra straps, and/or 'unclip' your bra flaps, when it suits.

Items such as 'Silverettes' are best avoided, or only used for brief intervals, as they can result in soggy nipple tissue which more likely to become damaged

**Gel pads** can also be very effective if the face (end) of the nipple is grazed. If you store them in the fridge, they can be cool and soothing. They're not so useful if the damage is at the base of the nipples, or the sides. Keep gel pads clean and if they start to look cloudy, throw them out as they can spread bacteria to any broken skin. They definitely shouldn't be used if you have a nipple infection.

**Fissures** – this is where nipple damage and cracks have become quite deep, into the second layer of skin. They need to heal from the bottom up, so may take a bit longer. They're more obvious to see after baby feeds, as they have been opened. The key is to keep them clean, leave them open and apply 'moist wound healing'. Ask your midwife, nurse or doctor for a plan to manage this.



Damp Green Tea bags are a useful alternative

Cracks and fissures on the side or base of a nipple form where the tissue has been creased. This happens when the nipple has been bent towards that side. So always check your baby is positioned well and not 'overshooting' or a little 'around the corner'

Paracetamol for pain &/or Ibuprofen for pain and inflammation, are safe to use while breastfeeding

Nipple Shields are sometimes used to minimize pain. However it is important that they are put on correctly – See Nipple Shields information page

**Infected nipples** – (bacterial) these are really painful, and quite common, especially if anyone has skin infections in your household. As well as the above treatment, your midwife or GP might take a swab and give you a prescription for antibiotics.



Infection healing



Helensville Birthing Centre  
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