

# Clogged Duct

## What is it?

A clogged duct, also called a blocked or plugged duct, is when there is an area of the breast where the milk is obstructed and therefore not flowing normally. This is a fairly common breastfeeding issue that can usually be resolved easily at home.

## Symptoms of a clog can include:

- + A tender or hard spot in the breast that doesn't resolve after nursing or pumping.
- + The breast may be warm to the touch.
- + A temporary decrease in milk output from that breast.
- + A milk blister or "bleb" on tip of nipple.

## Tips to prevent clogs in the future:

- + Check for potential clogs whenever nursing, pumping, or showering—feel for tender spots or lumpy spots that don't resolve when emptied.
- + Avoid wearing bras or clothing that are too tight or bras with underwire.
- + Keep your breasts comfortable. Don't skip a nursing or pumping session if you can help it.
- + Remember, you can always hand express if you need relief and you can't nurse or pump for whatever reason.
- + Treat ASAP (see page 2).

## RED FLAG/CAUTION:

If you have a fever or start feeling like you have the flu, call your OB or midwife. This could mean the clogged duct has already developed into mastitis and that's something you cannot treat on your own.

# Clogged Duct

## Steps to resolve a plugged or clogged duct:

1. **Begin treatment as soon as possible.**

If what you have is indeed a clogged duct, address it right away. If left untreated, clogged ducts can lead to mastitis (a breast infection). You don't want to ignore it.

2. **Take a warm shower ASAP.** Get in the shower as soon as you can and run warm water over the tender breast. If a shower is not possible, use a warm compress. (Lactation Consultant trick: a diaper filled with hot water works well!) Warm moist heat helps move the milk.

3. **Massage the breast.** While still in the shower, or while you still have the warm compress handy, massage the tender breast. Think about clearing the path ahead of the spot first. Start massaging just before the clog and

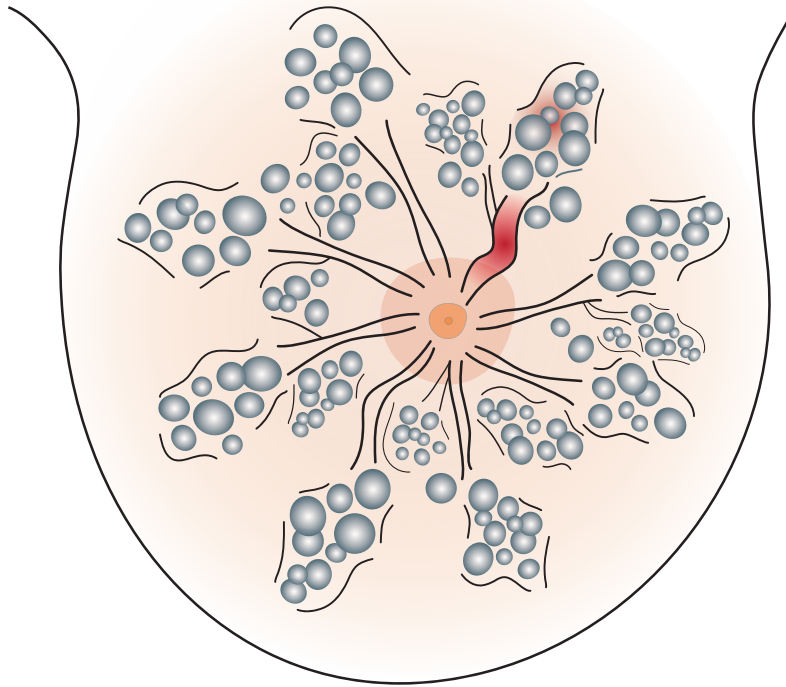
continue to move forward towards the nipple, then go back and work on the lump itself. Don't begin by pushing right on the lump—this will likely be painful and won't help! Alternate this type of massage with very gentle upward movement toward armpit. (Lactation Consultant trick: massaging with the butt of an electric toothbrush can help with stubborn clogs.)

4. **Nurse or pump.** Right after taking a shower or applying a warm compress, nurse your baby. Nursing is a more effective way of emptying your breasts than pumping, however, if nursing is too painful or if you are separated from your baby, pumping is a good backup option. Continue with the breast massage while you are nursing or pumping.

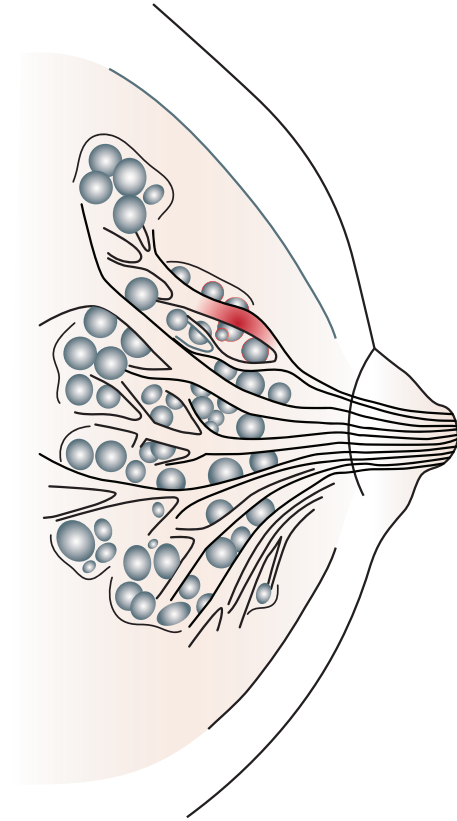
5. **Treat your pain + swelling.** Most moms find relief from ice packs after nursing or pumping. You can also take ibuprofen to help ease the discomfort/reduce inflammation. Some moms alternate heat and ice for about 24 hours, or until the clog is resolved. Do what feels best! Follow your body's lead.

6. **Don't neglect the other breast.** Make sure you're still using both breasts to feed as you don't want to end up with a clog on the other side.

# Clogged Duct



FRONT



SIDE