Breast Feeding -
Blocked Milk Duct

A blocked milk duct is a tender or painful hard lump in the breast of a breastfeeding mother. A blocked milk duct is different from mastitis (an inflammation or an infection of the breast) because you will not have a fever or feel like you have the flu with a blocked milk duct.

Can be caused by:

- Skipped or delayed feedings.
- Skipped or delayed pumping.
- Breast feeding only on one side and not relieving the opposite breast.
- Pressure from wearing a tight bra or clothing.
- Pressure from mom’s finger forming an “air-hole” for the baby to breathe during nursing.
- A sleeping position that puts pressure on one area of the breast.
- Weaning or changes in your baby’s breastfeeding pattern.
- Half emptying or not fully emptying your breast.
- An abundant milk supply.

If your baby is able to breast feed:

- Apply moist heat to the affected breast prior to feeding.
- Breastfeed on the affected breast first. This allows the ducts to empty more completely.
- Be sure your baby is properly attached onto your breast.
- Gently massage and compress the area of your breast with the blocked ducts while nursing to empty the ducts more completely. Massage starting in front and work back.
- Change your baby’s position at each feeding (cradle, side-sitting, cross cradle, lying down, football) in order to empty your ducts more completely.
- Nurse every 2 to 3 hours and be sure your baby is nursing effectively.
- If baby nurses on just one side, be sure to pump the other breast.
- Wean your baby gradually when you and your baby are ready to wean from breastfeeding.

See the back side of this sheet for additional information!
If your baby is currently not breast feeding and your are pumping:

- Apply moist heat to the affected breast prior to feeding.
- Gently massage and compress the area of your breast with the blocked duct while pumping.
- Pump consistently every 2 to 3 hours for 10 to 15 minutes on both breasts.

Other helpful tips:

- You may use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) for discomfort as needed (if you are not allergic to these medications).
- Take care of yourself by getting enough rest, eating nutritious foods, drinking enough fluids and getting help with your baby and household responsibilities.

A blocked milk duct usually goes away in 24-48 hours with treatment. Blocked milk ducts may worsen into mastitis if not treated. Also see “Breastfeeding-Mastitis” Care Card.

Call your doctor, nurse or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Lactation Management Program Help Line at (816) 346-1309 if the problem gets worse or does not resolve within 24 hours. You may need to visit your Obstetrician for further evaluation.