



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

An infected area of breast tissue that becomes filled with pus when the body fights the infection. It involves breast tissue, nipple, milk glands, and milk ducts.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Breast pain, tenderness, redness or hardness.
- Fever and chills.
- A general ill feeling.
- Tender lymph glands in the underarm area.

### CAUSES

Bacteria that enter the breast through the nipple (usually a cracked nipple during the early days of breast-feeding).

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Postpartum pelvic infection.
- Diabetes mellitus.
- Rheumatoid arthritis.
- Use of steroid medications.
- Heavy cigarette smoking.
- Lumpectomy with radiation.
- Silicone implants.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Clean the nipples and breasts thoroughly before and after nursing.
- Lubricate the nipples after nursing with vitamin A & D ointment or other topical medication if recommended.
- Avoid clothing that irritates the breasts.
- Don't allow a nursing infant to chew nipples.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable in 8 to 10 days with treatment. Draining the abscess is occasionally necessary to hasten healing.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- It is rarely necessary to discontinue breast-feeding even with severe infection. Occasionally, certain antibiotics (especially tetracycline) and pain relievers will require that breast-feeding be discontinued for a brief period of time, and it will be necessary to pump the breasts.
- Rarely, a fistula (abnormal passage between two organs or between the body and the outside) may develop.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Use warm-water (or cold water if it is more soothing) soaks to relieve pain and hasten healing.
- Discontinue nursing the baby from the infected breast until it heals. Use a breast pump to express milk regularly from the infected breast until you can resume nursing on that side.
- Surgery to drain the abscess (infrequent).

### MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics, if needed to fight infection.
- Prescription pain medication generally should be required only for 2 to 7 days following the procedure.

### ACTIVITY

After treatment, resume normal activity as soon as symptoms improve.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of a breast abscess.
- Any of the following occur during treatment:
  - Fever.
  - Pain becomes severe.
  - Infection seems to be spreading, despite treatment.
  - Symptoms don't improve in 72 hours.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.