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Vasospasms: Raynaud's Phenomenon of the nipples

What is a Vasospasm?

When blood vessels contract abnormally resulting in decreased blood flow to that area. This can happen to a parent who has Raynaud's phenomenon, cold sensitivity or nipple trauma. This can happen in the nipples during pregnancy or more often during breastfeeding. This causes stabbing/ throbbing pain like "pins and needles" as well as the end of your nipples turning white. The pain is often felt after the breastfeed, not during.

What can be done

- Working on the latch is number one to help prevent any nipple damage
- Keep breasts/ nipples warm after feeding, cold makes it worse. Immediately cover your breast with your hand when the baby comes off.
- Sometime a warm heating pad will be helpful
- Pectoral muscle massage, just below the collarbone. Rubbing briskly for 60 seconds can help improve blood flow.
- Use cream after feeding. Warm it up by rubbing between your fingers first then apply.
- Avoid any other vasoconstricting medications and nicotine
- Try a B 6 complex (100mg B6 twice a day which is different from the B complex amounts in the pill) and it must include niacin. If there is no change in 1 week stop this.
- Calcium and magnesium supplement with 250-300mg of magnesium helps relax muscle constriction. Should see improvement in 3-4 weeks.
- Can use nifedipine which is a vasodilator. 30 mg slow release OD usually relieves symptoms in 2 weeks and then can be stopped. If pain returns then nifedipine 30 mg slow release BID.

References

Pub Med "Nipple Pain, Damage, and vasospasm in the first 8 weeks postpartum" Miranda Buck, Lisa Amir, Meabh Cullinane, Susan Donath, Mar 1, 2014 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3934541/>
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