Treatment of Cracked Nipples

Cracked or excoriated nipples result in significant nipple pain. The first step to recovery is to have a lactation consultant help you figure out why your skin cracked or eroded in the first place. Most of the time, infant positioning is the cause of the problem. Occasionally, a mother’s breast anatomy or the infant’s mouth anatomy may contribute to the problem.

After correcting the underlying problems, you will need to heal. Here are some tips on healing:

- Express a drop of your milk on your nipples
- If you do not have wool sensitivity, apply a lanolin cream or ointment to your nipples
- You can safely use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for pain. It will not hurt your baby. If you have been prescribed a combination prescription medication that contains acetaminophen (such as Percocet) do not take any extra acetaminophen.
- Keep your baby very close to you so that you can pick up on early feeding cues. Babies who show these signs gently latch, which means less pain for you. A frenzied very hungry baby will more strongly and poorly latch. This will likely hurt more and may cause more injury. This is why sending a baby to a hospital nursery often results in breastfeeding problems.
- Make sure that your baby’s face is directly facing your breast while feeding
- Keep your baby in position throughout the feed. A tired mom may not notice a gradual change in the baby’s position
- Only use a nipple shield if it has been recommended by a health professional