



# RISING SUN MIDWIFERY

## Breast Care

In the prenatal period, your breasts are changing and growing. Breast changes may have been one of the first noticeable markers of pregnancy for you. They will keep changing as things progress and taking good care of them now will help you take good care of your baby when the time comes.

Now, while you are pregnant, appropriate breast support is different from what it was before pregnancy. If you are accustomed to not wearing bras, you may find that your larger tender breasts are sore at the end of the day. If you are still wearing your pre-pregnancy bras, you may find that your breasts hurt all the time, or especially when you take the bra off.

A good, gentle, supportive bra will help you in numerous ways. First make sure that you are wearing a bra that does not have a “push-up” feature, nor under-wires. Also make sure that your bra fits very well, or is on the big side (remember, they will get bigger with breastfeeding). Pressure on the breast tissue can not only cause pain, but can damage the tender lymphatic tissue and milk glands. Loose-fitting sports bras are great, as are nursing bras. Please buy one in a store where you can be fitted correctly and try it on. Try on several, you may be surprised by the comfort available in bra styles you’ve never tried before – and buy bigger to give your breasts room to grow with no pressure!

Nipples are another sore spot (sorry, that’s a lame joke). But really, be tender to your nipples – breastfeeding will do a lot to them. Some grandmothers advise young women to “toughen up” their nipples. This can be very painful and is unnecessary - if you want to do it, there is no harm as long as it does not cause contractions.

If you have inverted nipples, you can try rolling them gently between your fingers to pop the nipple out – if this works, great! If you have any contractions while touching your nipples, stop right away – especially if you are not yet due to deliver. Wearing nipple shells in your bra toward the end of pregnancy can help inverted nipples to stretch out. You may want to have a latch assist or nipple shield on hand for breastfeeding help.

After the baby is born, nursing will be a whole new skill that you and baby will learn together. There is a lot to learn about it, with specific instructions that need to be tailored to you and your baby’s unique situation. Remember though that breastfeeding, while causing some initial discomfort, should not hurt. A painful or inadequate latch can simply be due to technique – be comforted that a better technique can be learned! If breastfeeding is painful; if your breasts are very sore, hard or red; if the baby is lethargic, hard to wake or loses weight after the 4<sup>th</sup> day of life: get help from a qualified caregiver right away.