

FROM CADTH

Certain experts recommend a drug called fluconazole (Diflucan) to be taken by breastfeeding moms for a number of days or weeks, when they are experiencing pain with breastfeeding due to a ductal yeast infection.

Some healthcare providers were concerned about using this medication in breastfeeding moms. They weren't sure that it was safe for babies, and they weren't sure that it worked to treat the infection.

So they turned to CADTH – an independent Canadian agency that specializes in examining the evidence on drugs and other health technologies – to look at the evidence for fluconazole to treat ductal yeast infections.

At CADTH, we searched the medical literature but found no evidence on fluconazole for the treatment of ductal yeast infections. This means that at this time, there is no proof from medical research that fluconazole works to treat breastfeeding pain caused by ductal yeast infections, or if its use is safe for breastfeeding babies.

We also looked at the literature for some other treatments of yeast infections in breastfeeding moms and babies but found that there was very little evidence to guide treatment decisions.

When we looked at the evidence for treating cracked and sore nipples (from any cause), expressed breast milk, peppermint water, and peppermint gel may be effective.



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REFERENCES

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NIPPLE AND BREAST PAIN WITH BREASTFEEDING.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
DUCTAL YEAST INFECTIONS AND
THEIR TREATMENT.



**Support for you and your baby from
Maternal Childcare Team Services and CADTH**

SAFETY WELLNESS HEALTH

From Maternal Childcare Team Services:



DUCTAL YEAST INFECTIONS AND BREASTFEEDING



Infections of the nipple or breast caused by yeast or *candida* can lead to pain and discomfort during breastfeeding.

Nipple pain or breast pain is a common reason for stopping breastfeeding so it's important to try and prevent and treat anything causing pain.

If nipple or breast pain does occur, it's important to know that a yeast infection is only one of the causes of pain with breastfeeding. If your pain is not due to a yeast infection, treatments for yeast infections will not help.

Frequent hand-washing, keeping nipples clean and dry, and a good latch may help to prevent sore nipples and yeast infections. Your healthcare provider may have other suggestions to prevent pain and yeast infections. You can make note of them below:

Pumping breast milk and feeding it to baby with a cup or bottle for a short time, may help sore nipples to heal.

Over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help to relieve breast and nipple pain.

It's not easy to diagnose a ductal yeast infection – there is no commonly-used lab test that can tell your healthcare provider if you have a ductal yeast infection. Instead, asking you about your pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and current symptoms are important, as well as a physical exam of you and your baby.

Treatments for ductal yeast infections should only be used when the diagnosis of a yeast infection has been made.

It's important that both you and your baby are treated for the yeast infection to prevent one of you from giving the infection back to the other.

For nipple yeast infections, an anti-fungal medication is often applied directly to the nipple. An oral medication is given to baby. However there may be other treatment options that your healthcare provider may recommend. You can make note of them below:

For ductal yeast infections, an anti-fungal medication that you take by mouth called fluconazole (Diflucan) is sometimes recommended.

Question:

Is fluconazole the best medication for treating ductal yeast infections during breastfeeding?

Answer:

It is currently unknown if fluconazole works to treat sore nipples and breasts caused by ductal yeast infections, or if its use is safe for breastfeeding babies.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Because there is no evidence to guide treatment decisions, you and your health care provider must make the decision that is best for you and your baby.

Things to consider

When deciding whether to take fluconazole for a suspected ductal yeast infection:

POSSIBLE BENEFITS	POSSIBLE RISKS
Improved or longer breastfeeding for baby	Unknown short and long-term side effects of the medication for baby and mom
Decreased pain with breastfeeding, increased enjoyment of breastfeeding	Medication may not work to improve pain or breastfeeding

And don't forget to speak to your healthcare provider if you have other questions or concerns about breastfeeding your baby.