

Nipple Health in lactating women

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Introduction

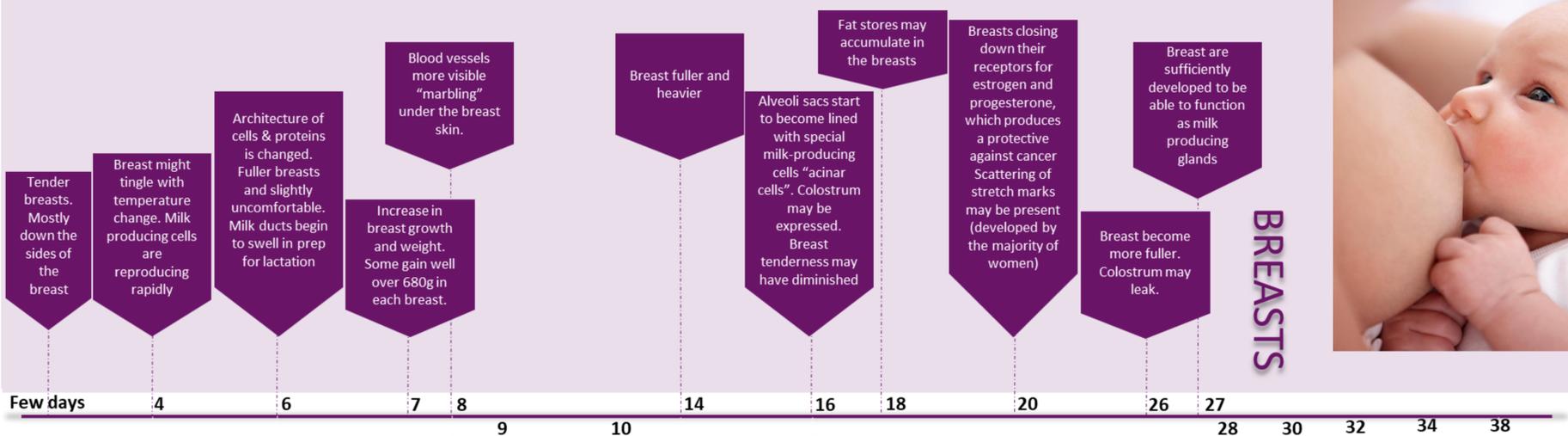
During pregnancy the breasts and nipples undergo many changes, which are all for the preparation of the lactation phase. In lactating women, nipple pain is a common problem, occurring in up to 96% of the women. Pain and discomfort are common in the first few weeks postpartum. Beyond this early period, reports of pain generally decline, but as many as one in five women report persistent pain at 2 months postpartum. Symptoms of nipple pain include (but are not limited to): stinging, itching, stabbing, aching, erythemic and blistered nipples (with or without fissures and eschar present). Nipple pain can occur at the start of a feed, during the feed or persist between feeding sessions [1,2].

Methods & Results

Literature search was performed to create a detailed insight of the skin (including nipple & areola) changes during pregnancy and to identify nipple pain causes in lactating women. The breast skin and nipples undergo many changes during pregnancy; however, it is unclear if these changes have an effect on nipple pain during the lactation phase.

Results

Skin changes during pregnancy [3,4,5,6]



Studies have reported that among the women (n=1323) who stopped breastfeeding during the first month postpartum, 29.3% cited pain and 36.8% identified sore, cracked or bleeding nipples [7]. Nipple pain is the second most common reason for early weaning and it can be caused by mechanical, physiological, dermatological and infective reasons [8].

| Mechanical [9,10] | Physiological [7,11] | Dermatological [7] | Infective [7,12] |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Poor positioning and attachment | Breast engorgement | Dermatitis | Mastitis |
| Blocked duct | Nipple vasospasm | Psoriasis | Candida infection |
| Anatomical variations in the infant | Hormonal sensitivity | Mammary Paget's disease | Herpes simplex |

Conclusions

The results from the literature search showed that:

- Many changes occur in the breast skin and nipple during pregnancy.
- Nipple pain is the second most common reason to stop lactating.
- Nipple pain during lactation could be caused by many factors.

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