

# Ichthyosis & Breastfeeding

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As you may have noticed, when searching for breastfeeding and ichthyosis, most information you'll be directed to is about breastfeeding an infant with ichthyosis. The information presented here is for the pregnant person with ichthyosis that intends to breast feed, in addition to widely found information on breast feeding in general. Due to the nature of ichthyosis, the constant renewing of your skin cells, you may come across issues that your health care provider is not aware of. And as most things in life, the more prepared you are, the more likely you will achieve a successful outcome.

Because the literature on breast feeding persons with ichthyosis is very limited, this information is based on anecdotal evidence as experienced by FIRST members, in cooperation with a Certified Breastfeeding Counselor and occupational therapist. Naturally, we are open to feedback from you, the experts through experience.

## Preparation prior to delivery

Pregnancy brings major changes to your body, and therefor also your skin. In order to have the most chance of a successful breastfeeding outcome, it is recommended to start preparing before the birth. In order for an infant to successfully breast feed, the milk ducts need to be clear and flowing. Not all pregnant persons produce breastmilk, or colostrum, prior to giving birth, but some do. It will be helpful to stimulate your nipples, as if you were manually expressing, to promote flow through the milk ducts. As mentioned, it is perfectly fine if nothing comes out. If your ichthyosis affects your breast area, you may want to start gentle exfoliation to the area too, using an exfoliant that would be suitable for your face.

## Medication: oral/topical

Anything that involves medication, whether prescribed or over the counter, should be cleared by your doctor or pediatrician before breastfeeding. It is recommended that you contact a pediatrician before giving birth to discuss medications and ointments that you may use. Once they have been cleared, it is worth looking at how and when to use them, so both your and your infant's needs are met.

An example is the use of urea cream. Once your baby gets into a breastfeeding routine, usually after a few weeks, there will be a few hours in between feeds, especially in the evening or at night. It may be worth considering your skin care routine and changing it to applying ointments to the nipple area after a feed, and then cleaning the area prior to the next feed, so the cream has optimum time to work. When talking to your doctor or pediatrician, consider each medication or ointment, and the time it is active in your system.

## Preventing closed milk ducts

Because of the faster regeneration of your skin, you have an increased chance of your milk ducts getting clogged or even closing over. This can lead to your infant having a reduced intake, and having to work harder, or even to mastitis when your milk glands can't empty properly. This is not so much a problem when your infant is exclusively breastfeeding because of the frequency of the feed, but something to be considered once your baby starts feeding less frequently. One way to prevent your milk ducts from closing over, is to express a little in between feeds (for example when you feed your baby solids, you can take a moment to 'get the ducts flowing'). This can usually be easily done manually if you are not wanting to increase your milk production.

As mentioned, this information is in addition to standard breastfeeding information. Local CLCs or IBCLCs will be able to assist you with any general questions you have, such as latching on, offer and demand, supply issues or anything else you may have questions about.

*This information is provided as a service to patients and parents of patients who have ichthyosis. It is not intended to supplement appropriate medical care, but instead to complement that care with guidance in practical issues facing patients and parents. Neither FIRST, its Board of Directors, Medical & Scientific Advisory Board, Board of Medical Editors, nor Foundation staff and officials endorse any treatments or products reported here. All issues pertaining to the care of patients with ichthyosis should be discussed with a dermatologist experienced in the treatment of their skin disorder.*



Foundation for  
Ichthyosis & Related  
Skin Types

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***Improve lives and seek cures for those affected by ichthyosis and related skin types.***

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