



Lauren Maggi, July 16, 2023

Evaluation and management of Plugged Ducts

Definition or Key Clinical Information: Plugged ducts are where milkflow is obstructed either in the nipple pore or further back in the ductal system (kellymom.com). It can be diagnosed by a physical exam and/or patient reported symptoms. It may develop into mastitis or a mammary abscess if left untreated (Yao et al., 2021). If recurrent clogged milk ducts occur, it is possible the parent will feel they need to, or be pressured to, wean.

Assessment

Risk Factors

- Tight bras or clothing
- Prone sleeping position
- Engorgement or inadequate milk removal
- Infrequent or skipped feedings
- Inflammation

(kellymom.com)

Subjective Symptoms

- Hard lump or wedge shaped area of engorgement
- Tender, hot, swollen, or red area on the breast
- Less milk output
- “Stringy” milk expressed
- Symptoms lessen after feeding

(kellymom.com)

Objective Signs

- Hard lump felt during physical exam
- May be accompanied by redness, swelling, and/or hot to the touch

Clinical Impressions Patient has pain and/or tenderness in the breast with a lump or hardness.

Clinical Test Considerations

- Blood testing to determine if infection is present and would indicate a differential diagnosis

Differential Diagnosis

- Breast abscess
- Inflammatory breast cancer

(Jacobs et al., 2013)

Management plan

Therapeutic measures to consider within the CPM scope

- Rest (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Fluids (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Nutrition for immune support (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Nurse frequently (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Heat & massage before nursing (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Loose clothing (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Cold inbetween nursing to treat inflammation (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen (kellymom.com, 2021)
- Vitamin C (kellymom.com, 2020)
- Integrated Breast Massage (Munsittikul et al., 2022)

Therapeutic measures commonly used by other practitioners

- Laser Therapy (Yao et al., 2021)

Ongoing care May be at higher risk for subsequent plugged ducts during this breast/chestfeeding relationship and subsequent breast/chestfeeding relationships (kellymom.com, 2020)

Indications for Consult, Collaboration, or Referral If the symptoms worsen or do not resolve in 24-48 hours, refer to an IBCLC.

Client and family education

- Handout on Integrated Breast Massage technique
- Discuss how to prevent pressure on the ducts
- Handout on feeding on demand and effective milk removal

References

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