Vasospasm is a sudden constriction (cramping) of blood vessels in the nipple. It can be very painful and may feel like a burning, shooting or throbbing pain. The nipple may change colour - turning white, blue and red before resuming its normal colour. The pain may be felt before, during and/or after a feed. Symptoms may last for a few seconds, minutes or longer.

You are more likely to suffer nipple vasospasm if you:

- Have a family history of Raynaud’s phenomenon.
- Tend to have ‘poor circulation’ (i.e. cold hands or feet).
- Have a low body mass index (i.e. are thin).

Possible triggers of vasospasm include:

- Nipple reaction to cold air.
- Poor attachment of the baby to the breast.
- Nipple damage, nipple thrush or infection.
- Improper use of breast pumps and nipple shields.
- Some medications and chemicals may worsen vasospasm, for example smoking.
How can I find out more information

1. PHONE
   Maternal and Child Health service by calling Community Health Intake (CHI) 6207 9977
   Pregnancy Birth & Baby 1800 882 436
   Australian Breastfeeding Association 1800 Mum 2 Mum or 1800 686 268

2. ATTEND
   ‘Early Days’ Group (infants up to 3 months of age) for assessment and ongoing breastfeeding information and support.
   Contact Community Health Intake (CHI) for locations and times.

3. VISIT:

4. SEE YOUR GP

How can I manage vasospasm?

Although there is not a specific cause of vasospasm, avoiding the triggers will help.

- Ensure correct latch of the baby to the breast.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine.
- Keep nipples warm (e.g. a heat pack or warmed soft cloth).
- Wear an extra layer of clothing.
- Breast warmers are available to buy from the Australian Breastfeeding Association
- Try nipple massage with warm olive oil

If pain continues you may consider:

- Ibuprofen and Paracetamol as per instructions on the packaging
- Fish oil, evening primrose oil or magnesium supplements may improve blood vessel relaxation and reduce spasm
- Prescription medication from your GP.

REFERENCES