

From Beth's Herb Garden...TIPS FOR TITS: HERBS FOR BREASTFEEDING

It's important to remind ourselves that almost any breastfeeding issue can be resolved by following the principles of baby-led, exclusive breastfeeding, as well as ensuring an excellent latch. (Ask your midwife for more information). However, plant medicine can also provide wonderful assistance with common concerns.

Engorgement: Allow your baby to feed, feed, feed, but if you are still having problems emptying your breasts, run a rolling pin over fresh green cabbage leaves and place a leaf over each breast (or tuck one into each bra cup). Change the leaves when they become flaccid. Another option is to apply a ginger compress. Grate or mash some fresh, peeled ginger root, then add a little boiled water and mix. Apply the warm paste over each breast, let sit for 15 minutes and rinse. Alternatively, you can soak clean facecloths in fresh ginger infusion (tea that has steeped at least 15 minutes, longer is lovely) and apply one to each breast, re-soaking and re-applying as the cloth cools. Running warm water over your breasts in the shower and hand expressing some milk before or after these treatments will contribute to their success.

Sore breasts: If your breasts are quite sore, or if you have nipple damage from a poor latch, applying a comfrey and marshmallow compress may be soothing. Make an infusion with comfrey leaf and marshmallow root by steeping the herbs overnight in boiled water (use about 1 handful of herbs per quart of water). Strain the herbs and re-heat the infusion, but do not allow it to boil. Soak facecloths in the infusion (warning--it's a little slimy—that's why it heals you!!) and apply as described above.

Low Milk Supply: Again, feed, feed, feed and get that supply and demand thing happening! However if you need a little boost, any of the following herbs can be drunk freely in an infusion to increase milk supply.

-blessed thistle, fennel seed, borage, fenugreek, alfalfa

Overabundant Milk Supply: Usually after a week or two of baby-led breastfeeding, your breasts will have just enough milk for your baby's needs—not too much, not too little. Occasionally, though, some women produce enough milk for a small village. If you seem to have more milk than your baby needs, you can consider sage leaf or parsley tea to slow milk production. Another option is becoming a donor for the BC Women's Hospital Milk Bank.