



## **Functional Pain**

### **What is functional pain?**

Based on your symptoms and physical exam, we have diagnosed you with functional breastfeeding pain. Functional pain happens when the brain's pain sensing centers recognize every-day sensations as pain. With functional pain, the filter in the brain that decides whether or not to interpret a sensation as pain is broken.

### **Treatment for Functional Pain**

To treat functional pain, the brain's pain filter needs to be "reset." The first step is to reduce inflammation – we recommend ibuprofen (Motrin), 600 mg every 6 hours. If you have a history of environmental allergies, an antihistamine such as loratidine (Claritin) or Cetirizine (Zyrtec) may also be helpful.

### **Coping with functional pain**

In addition, it can be helpful to changing the way you respond when you have a bout of pain. One way to think about this comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn's book, Full Catastrophe Living, where he writes: "Pain and suffering are not the same experience. Shinzen Young teaches that suffering is a function of two variables: pain and resistance. In comparing suffering to a mathematical formula, 'Suffering = pain x resistance.' If you double the resistance and the pain remains the same, you double the suffering. If your resistance is zero and the pain remains the same, your suffering is also zero.

Slow, deep breathing during a bout of pain helps many moms reduce their resistance, and thereby reduce their suffering, as their pain filter resets.

### **Triggers for functional pain**

Muscle tension in the shoulders and upper back can also trigger functional pain, and massage can be helpful.

If these measures do not reduce the pain, there are several medications that can help reset the filter, including propranolol, nortriptyline and duloxetine.

### **What pain medications are safe during breastfeeding?**

To help relieve your pain, it's safe to take Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 650-1000 mg every 4 to 6 hours (but no more than 4000 mg – or 8 extra-strength pills – per day) or Ibuprofen (Motrin) 400-600 mg every 6 hours.

### **When you should start to feel better**

It can take a few weeks for the brain's pain filter to reset, but you should notice a gradual improvement over days to weeks. If the pain is not improving after 7-10 days, or if you have any additional concerns, please call the Warmline at 984-974-8078 or 866-428-5608.