

*UNIT 2: OBSTETRICS*  
*SECTION A: NORMAL OBSTETRICS*

---

## Educational Topic 14: Lactation

**Rationale:** Knowledge of the physiology and function of the breast during lactation allows appropriate counseling to the pregnant and postpartum patient.

**Intended Learning Outcomes:**

A student should be able to:

- List the normal physiologic and anatomic change of the breast during pregnancy and postpartum.
- Recognize and know how to treat common postpartum abnormalities of the breast.
- List the benefits of breast feeding.
- Describe the resources and approach to determining medication safety during breast feeding.
- Describe common challenges in the initiation and maintenance of lactation.

TEACHING CASE

**CASE:** A 22 year-old primagravida comes to the office for an urgent visit 4 days postpartum. She states that she has not been feeling well, has had a fever at home, and has a tender swollen area on her left breast. She has no problems with her right breast. Her previous medical history is significant for severe depression for which she was taking lithium prior to pregnancy, but currently she is taking sertraline. On examination, she is in no distress but appears tired. Her temperature is 100.7°C and BP is 130/70. On breast examination, she has an erythematous tender 4 cm area on her left breast. Her left nipple is also tender and has some cracks. The right breast is normal. She really would like to breast feed, because she has heard it is good for her baby. However it has been causing her a lot of distress, and she feels she has not had adequate milk production. In addition, she is concerned about how it will affect her sleep and how often she would have to do it, especially at night. She also would like to resume taking lithium as her symptoms of severe depression are returning.

**COMPETENCY-BASED DISCUSSION & KEY TEACHING POINTS:**

Competencies addressed:

- Patient care
- Medical knowledge
- Practice-based learning and improvement
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills
- Systems Based Practice

1. What is the differential diagnosis? What signs and symptoms led to your diagnosis?
2. What treatment do you recommend for her breast condition?
3. List the benefits of breastfeeding.
4. How do you address this patient's concern about inadequate milk production?
5. What do you tell her about how frequently and how long to breastfeed with each feed?
6. What do you tell her about the safety of using lithium while breastfeeding?

#### REFERENCES

Beckman CRB, et al. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 7th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2013.

Hacker NF, Moore JG, et al. *Essentials of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 5th ed. Philadelphia: Saunders, 2010.

ACOG Practice Bulletin 92, Use of Psychiatric Medications During Pregnancy and Lactation, April 2008.

ACOG Committee Opinion 361, Breastfeeding: Maternal and Infant Aspects, February 2007. (Reaffirmed 2013)

ACOG Committee Opinion 570, Breastfeeding in Underserved Women: Increasing Initiation and Continuation of Breastfeeding, August 2013.

Briggs GG, Freeman RK, Yaffe SJ. *Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2008.