



Best for baby

Miss Tena Walters has been working as a consultant breast surgeon in Harley Street for the past 23 years. She is one of a minority of breast surgeons, who has had personal experience of breast feeding.

Normally the production of milk from the breast and the demand for nutrition from the baby is in perfect balance. The more the baby feeds and stimulates the breast the more the hormone prolactin is released from the pituitary gland and the more milk is produced. This means that if the baby is latched on but doesn't seem to be getting any milk, they are just putting in their order for the next day and when the baby is weaning, demand and milk production decreases.

Diagnosing breast problems during pregnancy or breast feeding is more complex than normal as the density, high blood supply and swelling of the breast tissue makes examination, imaging and biopsy interpretation more difficult.

Most abnormalities, which occur during pregnancy and breastfeeding are not sinister, but any breast lump should be investigated as rarely a breast cancer can occur.

The most common cause of a breast lump during pregnancy or lactation is the normal bumpiness of the active and developing breast

tissue but sometimes the lump is different from the normal tissue. For example a breast cyst, which is like a balloon containing fluid, which could be clear like water or milky, when it's called a galactocoele.

The contents of a cyst can become infected with bacteria forming an abscess. This is red, hot, tender and causes flu like symptoms. This needs to be aspirated under ultrasound guidance and the fluid should be tested to determine the most effective antibiotics. No amount of massaging will clear a breast abscess, cyst or galactocoele.

Mastitis is an infection, which spreads throughout the breast making it hot and tender and this also needs to be treated with antibiotics. A persistent infection can be caused by Candida or thrush.

If a breast lump is solid rather than cystic a biopsy is needed to remove a small amount of tissue, which can then be looked at microscopically. Most of these lumps are harmless and a condition known as a lactational adenoma, which disappears when breast feeding is finished.

Breast feeding should be a great experience, but if problems occur seek help as they may be easily remedied. ■

For appointments please call 01622 873058. For more details call Tena's PA Helen on 07982 249612 or email tenakerrywalters@gmail.com

“Most abnormalities, which occur during pregnancy and breastfeeding are not sinister, but any breast lump should be investigated as rarely a breast cancer can occur”

