

Ask the Experts

HOW TO CORRECT INVERTED NIPPLES?

Q My daughter, who is in her late 20s, is attractive and healthy. However, she has inverted nipples which, I think, affects her psychologically. Can this condition be corrected? If so, what is the success rate?

A Having beautiful breasts means the world to every woman. With inverted nipples, it is natural for your daughter to feel less attractive. Inverted nipples can be present in one or both breasts when the nipples point inwards rather than outwards. The condition can be hereditary and can occur in men as well.

It happens during puberty when the breasts start to develop. There is a kind of fibrotic tissue or ligament that holds

the nipple inwards and the nipple-areola muscle (a circumferential muscle like a sphincter) contracts and cannot project the nipple outwards. The condition can make nipples unhygienic, causing an aggravating sub-clinical infection.

Most of the time, depending on the degree or severity, the condition does not pose a health risk. However, it can make breastfeeding difficult, increasing the risk of mastitis, a kind of breast infection or inflammation during lactation.

A mild case of an inverted nipple can be treated by stretching out the nipple to "pop" it out. Correctly manipulated, even a severe condition can be rectified. However, if the manipulation is too

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traumatic, the condition can be aggravated. I usually advise the patient to try and gently squeeze the areola area to see if the inverted nipple will pop out.

For more severe cases, surgery is an option. Sometimes, it requires only a minor procedure under local anaesthesia. The surgery is done in a way which preserves the milk ducts. There is usually a minimal risk of side effects.

Re-inversion of the nipples can happen. A small risk of infection or slight bleeding and temporary loss of sensation may occur for some.

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