

## Rhus tox for Nipple Trauma

A lady saw me with her week-old baby for “attachment problems”. After a feed the nipple was distinctly wedge-shaped, which means that not enough of the lower part of the nipple tissue was being taken in by the baby. This was corrected by encouraging a wide gape; that is not letting baby attach until the mouth was wide open, and then making sure that even compression was achieved by using a scissor grip and pointing the nipple to the baby’s nose and quickly swivelling the nipple into the mouth in a downward movement.

However her nipple pain persisted as did the bleeding. She described the pain as “feeling like razor blades”.

In this situation I suspect that nipple thrush is the deeper cause. However, the nipple colour was normal and, on taking a history, it was ascertained that she had no previous history of candida and her diet was good. She had few yeasts or sugars; although, at present, she did tell me that she was craving dairy in all its forms.

The rubric **MAMMAE; nipples; nursing when** contains the following remedies for consideration: **am, bor, CAST-EQ, CROT-TIG, graph, MERC-C, nit-ac, NUX-V, petr, PHEL, PHYT, puls, rat, rhus-t, sang, SARS, sep, SIL, sulph** (Van Zandvoort, R: *The Complete Repertory*)

Symptoms and events in her timeline that led me to the Simillimum were:

- A significant neck trauma in her early twenties that has left her with recurring headaches and the need for regular acupuncture to relieve the pain
- Chicken pox at 23 ( a “bad dose”) suppressed with calamine lotion
- Fear of having an accident
- Fear of violent attack
- Craving for milk
- Carpel tunnel in the right wrist in the pregnancy which had moved to the left after the birth
- Haemorrhoids
- Pain in the feet when walking due to fluid retention

She responded brilliantly to *Rhus tox* 30C tds in a water potency with adjunctive bathing of the nipples in a lotion prepared from *Calendula* and *Hypericum* tinctures.

Herpes zoster can be problematic during breastfeeding if there’s been a history of suppressed chicken pox. In this lady’s case the neck trauma was a maintaining cause and I advised physiotherapy treatment, with an exercise regime to strengthen the neck muscles.



In other similar cases, the symptoms have resolved with an actual herpetic outbreak. On this occasion that did not happen; and the consequence of the prescription was total amelioration of the nipple pain within a few days with no further return of symptoms.

When *Rhus tox* is the Simillimum during an outbreak of herpes and there's a strong desire for milk (a keynote to the prescription) it is due to a desire to increase l-lysine in the diet. Dairy and seafoods are good dietary sources of l-lysine; which, among other things, promotes good calcium absorption from the gut. Interestingly, the richest food source of l-lysine is human milk and expressed breast milk is excellent as a topical application for any herpetic eruption. When herpes is being treated, arginine intake needs to be minimised. Nuts and seeds and chocolate are high in arginine.