

Comfort Measures for Breast Engorgement

On about the 3rd day after birth, your breasts may feel hard and swollen. This is called engorgement. It may feel like a crisis, but most times it only lasts a short time. It usually begins by the 3rd day after birth and resolves within a couple of days.

Tips

Feed Your Baby

- Wake your baby for feeding every 2 hours, if you can.

Apply Warmth

Take a warm shower or tub bath. In the tub or shower, massage your breasts and let the milk flow out. Then wrap your breasts in warm, wet washcloths. Cover with plastic wrap or disposable diapers to keep the warmth in.

- Dip your breasts in a basin of warm water. Let the milk flow out.

Try Massage

- Gently massage your breasts and try to release some of the extra milk by compressing your whole breast (not your nipples). There is a helpful online video about breast massage at <http://bfmedneo.com/our-services/breast-massage/>.
- Use an electric massager on a “vibrate” setting.
- Roll a smooth cylinder, like a jar or a rolling pin, from your underarm to your nipple.
- Compress your areola with your fingers. This will soften it to help your baby latch on.



Nursing more often may help ease breast engorgement.

After Nursing

- Apply cool compresses. Use gel packs made for this purpose, a bag of frozen peas, wet washcloths chilled in the freezer, or cold, raw cabbage leaves.
- Wear a bra **only** if it fits well and feels good. Do not wear one if it digs into you and leaves red marks! If you have a stretch bra that is designed for exercise, try wearing it during the day. And, wear it to bed if the pain is keeping you awake at night.
- Wear a protective cover, such as breast shells, to let some of the milk leak out.
- Take a pain reliever like ibuprofen (such as Motrin or Advil). This relieves pain and also reduces swelling.

Note: While you are still bleeding from your vagina, avoid aspirin because it can increase bleeding.

If All Else Fails

If nothing works to ease engorgement, use a hospital-quality electric breast pump to remove the extra milk. This is not your first choice, unless your baby cannot breastfeed.

Questions?

If you have tried the suggestions in this handout and the engorgement is not relieved within 24 hours, call Lactation Services at 206.598.4628.