

Engorgement



Engorgement occurs when the breasts become overly full. Breasts normally feel very full about three to five days after delivery as your body adjusts to nursing. Some fullness is normal. But, excess fullness can happen if the baby doesn't feed often enough or doesn't remove enough milk from your breasts. The breasts get swollen, hard, sore, red and warm to the touch. The fullness may reach to the armpits. You can relieve engorgement quickly by nursing often, making sure your breasts are drained and using comfort measures to relieve the swelling. Try these tips:

- ♥ To help baby latch onto the breast, **relieve the fullness first**. Suggestions:
 - Apply a cold compress to reduce swelling. You can also apply a warm compress for a few minutes or massage your breasts while taking a warm shower. This helps get the milk flowing. Then express some milk by hand or pump to soften the breast/nipple.
 - Apply pressure to your areola (the dark part around the nipple) to disperse the swelling. Using both hands, place the flats of your fingertips around the areola. Apply a steady, gentle pressure inward toward your ribs for at least 1 minute.

- ♥ After latching the baby on, **gently massage your breast while nursing** to increase milk flow.

- ♥ **Nurse long enough for your baby to soften the breasts**. If your breasts do not feel softer after feeding, pump some milk to soften them. Remember, to relieve engorgement, the breasts must be drained. If the baby is not nursing well, use a pump and get help with positioning and latch to improve feedings at the breast. Call WIC, a breastfeeding support group or lactation consultant. You can also search the web for advice in the meantime.

- ♥ **Nurse often**. Wake the baby to nurse if he sleeps longer than 3 hours during the day or 5 hours at night.

- ♥ Nurse on the most engorged side first.

- ♥ Breastfeed in the **semi-reclined or laid-back position** and lie on your back as much as possible. If the breasts are the highest part of the body, fluids will tend to drain from them.

- ♥ Between feedings, **apply ice packs** wrapped in a towel (or a package of frozen vegetables) for about 10 minutes to reduce pain and swelling. Ibuprofen is also compatible with breastfeeding. Discuss with your doctor and take according to package directions

- ♥ **Avoid pacifiers and supplemental formula**. It makes baby nurse less often. Nursing less often = more breast fullness! Also avoid pumping unless your breasts do not feel softer after feeding.

- ♥ Call your doctor or lactation consultant if symptoms don't improve in 24 hours.

*Nursing isn't always an easy choice. You made the best choice!
Engorgement can be resolved quickly.*



Breastfeeding Awareness and Support Program
Healthy Baby Line
1-800-986-BABY



Pennsylvania WIC Program
1-800-WIC-WINS
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