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*Photo Source: United States Breastfeeding Committee

B-26/0223



RELIEVING ENGORGEMENT

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING



Engorgement is extreme fullness of the breasts, which causes an uncomfortable feeling. It is not unusual. It can be very normal if it happens when mature milk first comes in, about 2 to 5 days after giving birth. Those who nurse older infants can also get engorged if the breast is not emptied well or if one or more feedings are skipped.

Keep in mind that there are things you can do to prevent or relieve engorged breasts. If your breasts are engorged, you should still breastfeed or pump milk from your breasts. When you empty your breasts well, it will help resolve the problem and your breasts will feel softer.

Signs you may be engorged

- One or both breasts are hard and warm.
- Skin in the breast area is tight and shiny.
- You feel constant soreness throughout one or both of your breasts.
- It may be hard for your baby to latch onto one or both breasts.



Tips to prevent and relieve engorgement

Breastfeed often

Feed your baby at least every 2 to 3 hours. If your baby does not wake that often, wake them to feed. Be sure to nurse long enough to soften and empty the breast – at least 10 to 15 minutes per breast.

Avoid giving your baby pacifiers or bottles

Babies suck differently on pacifiers and bottle nipples than they do from the breast. Using these might confuse your baby and make them less able to get milk from your breast.

Avoid giving your baby water and formula

Water (which is usually not recommended for babies less than 6 months old) and formula may fill your baby up so they do not take as much breastmilk from you.

Use a warm compress just before nursing

About 10 minutes before you begin to nurse your baby, place a clean warm compress on your breasts. Some people take a warm shower to help relieve discomfort.

Gently massage your breasts

Lean back and, with a light touch, gently stroke away from the nipple to help soften your breasts just before feeding. Some breastfeeding parents find it helpful to also do this during the feeding.

Remove a small amount of milk

If it is hard for your baby to latch onto the area around your nipple, try to hand express or pump a little milk to soften the breast tissue.

Nurse on the more engorged breast first

Your baby's suck is often strongest at the start of the feeding.

You need your rest, too!

Take care of yourself. Try resting when your baby naps. Ask friends and family for help—they can free up your time by doing laundry, cleaning, cooking, or caring for the baby while you sleep.

Between feedings use a cold compress on your breasts to ease discomfort

A wet cloth that has been placed in the freezer or a bag of frozen peas or corn works well as a compress. Protect your skin by wrapping the compress in a soft dry cloth.

Be sure nothing is too snug over your breasts

Choose a supportive bra without an underwire. Your clothing, especially your bra and nightgown, should not be too tight. If using a baby carrier, it should not bind your breast tissue in the underarm area.



Trust your body

After the first few weeks of breastfeeding, your body will adjust to your baby's needs and your breasts will feel softer. This does not mean you are making less milk. If you are concerned, ask your breastfeeding specialist how you can be sure the baby is getting enough of your milk.