

Breast Engorgement

Engorgement usually begins on the third to fifth day after delivery. It can also occur when feedings are missed or weaning occurs too abruptly. Engorgement should be treated quickly to prevent feeding problems such as sore nipples, plugged ducts or mastitis. If treated promptly, engorgement should decrease within 12 to 48 hours. *Please call your midwife if you have a lump or tender spot in the breast that is accompanied by fever.*

What to Do:

- Apply warm compresses or have a warm breast soak for five to ten minutes before feeding and as necessary for comfort.
- Hand express or pump a little to help relieve pressure. This will not bring in more milk.
- Wear a comfortable (not too tight bra) for support.
- A warm shower or a gentle hand held shower spray can be helpful.
- Massage breasts and hand express to soften nipple and surrounding breast tissue before nursing. Also, continue to massage breasts gently while feeding or pumping.
- Allow baby to nurse frequently, every 2 to 3 hours, and more often if he wants.
- Baby should nurse effectively on one side, for at least 15 to 20 minutes, and go on to the other side if she/he desires.
- If baby nurses on only one side, allow the other side to flow freely. If the breast is still uncomfortable, hand express or pump until softer and more comfortable.
- After nursing, apply fresh, cool (from the fridge), green cabbage leaves around breasts inside bra. Cut out the thick core in the middle of the leaf and apply directly. Change as necessary (approximately every two hours or after feeds) so they are always crisp and cool. Use for 12 to 24 hours.
- Ice packs or cool compresses can be alternated with heat. Use a small bag of frozen peas or a place a clean wet disposable diaper in the freezer until cold.
- Don't avoid drinking fluids as it doesn't reduce engorgement. Drink to thirst.
- Avoid giving your baby bottles.