

NEW MOTHER FACT SHEET

Breast Engorgement



What Is Normal?

- Your breasts will get larger and heavier during the first week after delivery.
- A feeling of fullness two to three days after delivery is normal.

Signs of Engorgement

- Breasts are swollen, hard and painful.
- Skin of breast is red, shiny and hot.
- Nipple is hard for the baby to grasp.
- The mother's body temperature rises.

Causes

- Too much time between feedings.
- Missed feedings.
- Incorrect latching and positioning of baby on breast.

Prevention



- Make sure the baby is latching on well and positioned correctly.
- Breastfeed as soon as possible after delivery.
- Breastfeed frequently, eight to 12 times per 24 hours.
- Do not skip nighttime feedings.
- Offer both breasts at every feeding.
- Express your milk if you delay or miss feedings.
- Begin each feeding on the breast offered last.
- Avoid feeding your baby water or formula unless directed by your health-care provider.
- Avoid the use of bottles or pacifiers while baby is learning to breastfeed.
- Unrelieved, prolonged engorgement leads to a lowered milk supply.

Treatment for Engorgement

- If the breast is severely swollen, apply an icy cold compress.
- Be sure to place a light towel between the cold compress and your breast.
- If breasts are leaking freely, take a warm shower; apply a hot, moist towel to breasts; or soak breasts in a basin of warm water for up to five minutes.
- Using the flat part of your fingers, gently massage the breast in a circular pattern before and during breastfeeding or pumping.
- Wear a bra for comfort and support. Avoid bras that are too tight or have underwire.
- If baby takes only one breast, express the milk from the other breast.
- Try chilled raw cabbage leaves.
 - Wash leaves and crush with a rolling pin.
 - Apply to breast for at least 30 minutes. Relief is usually felt within two hours.
- Ask your health-care provider about medications to reduce pain and swelling.



When To Call Your Health-Care Provider

- If engorgement becomes severe or painful.
- Your baby has trouble latching on.
- Your baby has a low diaper count (fewer than six to eight wet diapers in 24 hours).
- You have symptoms of a breast infection known as mastitis:
 - Fever, higher than 100.4 degrees by mouth; increased fatigue; muscle aches; flu-like symptoms; red, hot or hard breasts; or red streaks extending from a lump toward the underarm area.

Check out www.gotmomma.com for more breastfeeding information.

