

Engorgement

It is normal for your breasts to become fuller two to four days after your baby is born. This is due to the colostrum changing to more mature milk.

The amount of fluid in your milk ducts increases, creating a feeling of fullness and, at the same time, increased blood and lymph fluid enters your breasts.

If milk is not removed by your baby suckling, or a breast pump, the fullness can turn into engorgement.

An engorged breast feels hard, may hurt, and may be shiny and hot.

To prevent engorgement:

- Put your baby to breast frequently after birth (whenever baby shows sucking cues or at least every 2-3 hours).
- Verify that your baby is latching well and swallowing. Even in the first 2 days while your baby receives colostrum, you should be able to hear (and see) some swallows. Seek assistance if you are unsure of your baby's latch.
- As your breasts become more firm, wake baby as necessary to nurse.

Sometimes, even with frequent suckling, you may get engorged.

If you do, try the following:

- Apply flexible cold packs** (large bags of frozen vegetables work well) to your breasts. Do not apply them directly to your skin but rather on top of your bra.
- Apply cold cabbage leaves.** Remove the outer leaves on a fresh head of green cabbage. Wash several of the inner leaves and crush them slightly. Wrap them around your breasts, directly next to the skin. Put your bra on to hold them in place. Leave the cabbage in place for 30 – 90 minutes (between feedings). You may apply the cabbage leaves several times a day, however, **stop using the cabbage as soon as the engorgement starts to decrease.**
- You may take ibuprofen** (Motrin) up to 400mg every 4 hours for the pain.
- If your baby will not latch during the engorgement,** it is important that you take milk out of your breasts. You may use manual expression, or you may find it necessary to use an electric breast pump, such as the Medela Symphony, Lactina, Pump N Style or Freestyle. **Continue to try and get baby to latch.** Pump and finger or bottlefeed (use a slow flow nipple) until latch resumes.
- If you find that you have **enlarged, firm breast tissue in your underarm** shortly after birth, you may use cold packs or cabbage leaves in that area also.

Adapted from Milkworks