

Engorgement, or extreme fullness of the breasts, which causes an uncomfortable feeling, is not unusual. It can be very normal if it happens when the mature milk first comes in, about two to five days after giving birth. Women 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.

Signs you may be engorged...

- ✓ One or both of your breasts are hard and warm.
- ✓ Your 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 of your breasts.

Tips to prevent and relieve engorgement...

- ♥ **Breastfeed often.**
Feed your baby at least every two to three hours. If your baby does not wake that often, wake him to feed. Be sure to nurse long enough to soften and empty the breast -- at least 10 - 15 minutes per breast.
- ♥ **Avoid giving your baby pacifiers or bottles.**
Babies suck differently on rubber bottle and pacifier nipples than they do on a mother's breast. If you use these, it may confuse your baby and make him 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 he does not take as much breast milk from you.
- ♥ **Use a warm compress just before nursing.**
About 10 minutes before you begin to nurse your baby, place a warm compress on your breasts. Some women find that taking a warm shower will help relieve discomfort.
- ♥ **Massage your breasts.**
Gently massage your breasts, working towards the nipple, just before and during feedings.
- ♥ **Express 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.

Relieving Engorgement

Tips for Successful Breastfeeding

- ♥ 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!
Be sure to 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 towel 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 cloth.
- ♥ Wear a supportive bra.
Choose a supportive bra without an underwire. Your clothing, especially your bra and nightgown, should not be too tight. Use a baby carrier that does not bind your breast tissue in the underarm area.

After the first few weeks of breastfeeding, your body will adjust to your baby's needs, your breasts will feel less full, and you will feel better. 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.



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Breastfeeding Notes: