

Engorgement

What is engorgement?

A few days after delivery the breasts begin to produce larger amounts of milk. This requires more blood flowing to the breasts and also results in increased lymph fluid collecting in the breasts. All of this results in the breasts quickly feeling very full and heavy and becoming larger. This is normal.

Engorgement happens when the breasts get too full of fluids. The breasts are hard, tender, warm, and flushed. It can also cause a low-grade temperature.

Mothers who suddenly stop nursing can also get engorged. What should I do if I get engorged? Most importantly, continue nursing your baby on demand. If the breasts are not comfortable after feeds, you can:

- massage the breasts after feedings. This removes extra milk and increases lymph drainage. This is done by gently stroking the breast towards the nipple. You should use a bit of cooking oil on your hands to help glide over the breast. Each stroke should take about five seconds and most mothers feel much better after 10 minutes. There will be milk leaking so it is best to get a towel to catch the milk.
- apply cold compresses after massaging. This can reduce swelling and relieve pain. The best cold compresses are green cabbage leaves!
- if the above are not enough to soften the breast, you can pump and drain the breasts as needed. Remember that some mothers cannot pump if very engorged.
- if your areola is too firm for baby to latch, soften it before feeding by gently squeezing out milk. This makes it easier for baby to latch, improving his ability to soften the breast and reducing the likelihood of nipple pain and damage.

How long will engorgement last?

Engorgement that is promptly and properly treated usually lasts between twelve and forty-eight hours.

Mothers who are engorged tend to have a very good milk supply. Therefore, your baby will grow well and feed quickly!