

BREASTFEEDING BABIES AND CHILDREN

Engorgement

Breast changes:

It is normal for your breasts to feel larger and heavier within several days of giving birth to your baby. This is because you are now producing larger amounts of milk. If your baby is breastfeeding well, this fullness will decrease after two or three weeks. However, if your breasts are not drained often and well, this normal breast fullness can lead to uncomfortable engorgement.

This chart will help to you to tell the difference between breast fullness and engorgement.

Symptoms

Normal breast fullness	Problematic engorgement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves mild swelling caused by increasing amounts of fluids and milk in your breasts • Often occurs two-six days after delivery • Makes breasts feel heavy, tender and warm • Does not make you feel unwell or feverish • The nipple and areola are soft and your baby can still latch onto the breast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often involves swollen, hard breasts with shiny, pink skin • May result in a low-grade fever • Can involve swelling in the underarm area as well • Swelling of breast and/or areola make it hard to latch your baby onto the breast • Occasionally results in numbness and tingling of hands • Can interfere with milk removal and production • Is NOT normal, and can be resolved with some simple suggestions

You've got what it takes!

For more information call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653



Suggestions for helping yourself

Apply cold

Cold reduces swelling so that milk can flow more easily:

- Apply ice, such as bags of frozen vegetables or cold compresses to your breasts between feedings or pumping sessions: 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off
- Keep a layer of fabric between the ice and your skin

Do not apply heat to swollen, engorged breasts
While the heat may feel soothing, it can increase swelling and slow milk flow

Apply cabbage leaves:

Cabbage leaves can reduce swelling and feel soothing:

- Throw away the outermost leaves of a raw, green cabbage
- Rinse and dry the next layer of leaves
- Apply leaves around the breast and areola, but not over the nipple
- Change leaves once they are wilted, or at least every 2 hours
- Cool the cabbage in the fridge to increase the soothing effect
- Stop using cabbage when the swelling subsides or if rash or other signs of allergy appear

Express breastmilk:

Expressing breastmilk prior to feedings can soften the areola to make it easier for your baby to latch

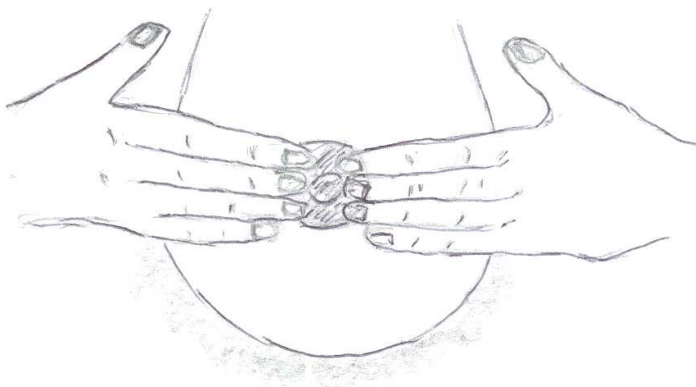
- Manual expression can be used to remove milk by hand – see *Expressing your breastmilk* fact sheet
- A good quality hand or electric breast pump can be used at a low setting – see *Choosing a breast pump* fact sheet
- If your baby cannot latch, and you are unable to express milk, continue to apply cold to your breasts to reduce swelling until you are able to remove breastmilk

Reduce swelling in areola:

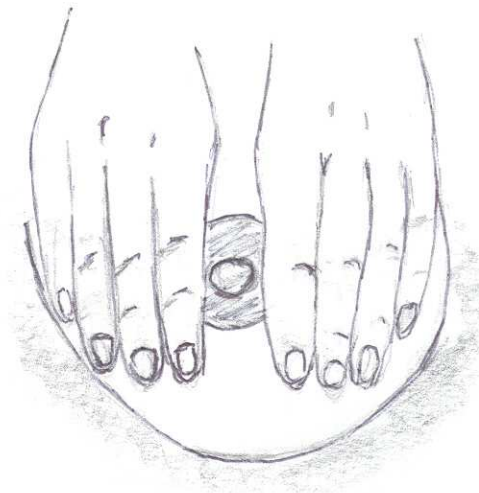
- Do this right before you try to latch at each feeding until swelling is gone
- This technique will make it easier for your baby to latch
- Use your fingertips on your areola to press the swelling back into the breast
- Push in towards your back and hold for 30 to 60 seconds
- This should create softer areas on your areola
- Move around the areola and press again and hold for another 30 – 60 seconds
- Continue up to 3 times until your areola is soft enough for your baby to latch

*Use fingertips of both hands
to press on areola*

*You can also use the fingertips
of one hand to press on areola*



*If your fingernails are long
you can use the sides of
your hands to press*



Massage breasts:

- Gently massage your breasts before and during a feeding, or while pumping, to help the breastmilk to flow
- Use small circular movements with the flat of your fingers over areas that feel full

Other suggestions to reduce swelling:

- **Breastfeed frequently:** about 8-12 times in each 24 hours
- If your baby is latching on the breast, be sure that the latch is deep and pain-free
- If your baby is not latching at the breast, pump your breasts 8 times each 24 hours
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the use of over the counter medication to decrease swelling and reduce pain
- Wear a supportive bra, or no bra at all, but do not wear a bra that is too tight or bind your breasts
- Elevate your breasts by spending some time lying flat on your back between feedings

When to get help:

If you begin to feel flu-like symptoms, develop a fever, and/or notice increased pain or redness of your breasts, see a doctor

If you are having difficulty breastfeeding your baby contact a Public Health Nurse, breastfeeding clinic, lactation consultant or doctor to help you through this challenging time

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