

Engorgement (inflammatory mastitis) prevention and treatment or engorgement

This teaching sheet includes some helpful hints to help prevent your breasts from becoming engorged.

- Engorgement means that your breasts are swollen, hard and uncomfortable. Mastitis is inflammation of the breast.
- This is normal and most often happens in the first week after giving birth.
- It is most often easy to treat, and you can keep breastfeeding or pumping.

What if my baby is feeding at the breast?

- Breastfeed often. Most newborns nurse 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (every 2 to 3 hours).
- You may need to express a small amount of milk first. This makes the breast soft enough for your baby to latch onto the areola. The areola is the dark area around the nipple.
- Reverse pressure softening before breastfeeding may be helpful. Talk with your lactation consultant for more details.

What if my baby is **NOT** feeding at the breast?

Pump or express your milk often:

- If your baby is a newborn, pump 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (every 2 to 3 hours, 15 to 20 minutes each time).
- If your baby is older than a few weeks, pump as often as your baby would eat or is eating.

How does light breast massage help?

- Gentle compressions or light breast massage may help encourage milk movement.
- Do not massage your breasts with strong or deep pressure. This may increase inflammation or cause damage to the breast tissue.
- Use of heat or vibration devices is not advised.

What is the treatment for breast engorgement?

- Place cold compresses or ice packs on your breasts between pumping. This helps decrease swelling.
- Cabbage leaves may provide cooling relief.
 - Use cool, clean, green cabbage leaves inside your bra all around your breasts.
 - Remove and throw away the cabbage leaves when they get warm, or after 2 hours.
- Keep feeding your baby at the breast or pumping at least 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (every 2 to 3 hours, 15 to 20 minutes each time).
- Over the counter pain medicine may help. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist to check what is safe to take.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Engorgement (inflammatory mastitis) prevention and treatment, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Most often, engorgement goes away if you follow the tips listed in this teaching sheet. Talk with a lactation consultant if you need help and support.

Call your doctor if you:

- Keep having pain.
- Have flu-like symptoms that may be caused by an infection called bacterial mastitis. This includes:
 - Fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)
 - Chills
 - Aches
 - Weakness

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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