



## Care Plan for Breast Engorgement

Between Days 3–5, mother's milk begins to increase as her milk "comes in." It is normal for your breasts to feel fuller, heavier and tender. Your breasts become engorged with milk and with other fluids that are used to make the milk. This normal fullness usually goes away when a baby is breastfeeding or if you are pumping often and well.

Some women develop hard, swollen, painful breasts when the milk first "comes in." The nipple and areola may become hard and flat, making it difficult for baby to latch on deeply to remove enough milk. Mother's nipples become sore from baby latching on to the nipple alone.

### Care Plan Goals:

- Remove milk from your breasts
- Decrease breast swelling

### Suggestions for Relieving Engorgement:

- Breastfeed or pump breasts every 2 to 2½ hours during the day and 3 hours at night
- Decrease swelling in your breasts by applying cold packs 20 minutes before breastfeeding or pumping (See more information on cold packs at the end of this care plan.)
- DO NOT USE HEAT when there is swelling. It can make it worse.
- Massage your breasts while breastfeeding or pumping by stroking toward your baby's mouth or the pump flange
- Ask your doctor about using a non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen, to reduce inflammation
- Wear a supportive, well-fitting bra but avoid a tight bra or clothing that may put pressure on milk-making breast tissue
- Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid high-sodium (salt) foods and liquids that may increase swelling

### Helping Baby Latch on When You Are Engorged:

Sometimes a mother's nipples and areolas become too full for baby to latch on. If your baby is unable to latch on for a feeding due to engorgement, then call the TriHealth Breastfeeding Care Center (513 862 7867 option 3).

### Relieving Uncomfortable Fullness after Breastfeeding:

When your breasts are still uncomfortably full after breastfeeding, you can express some milk for relief. It's important to express just enough to be comfortable. Do not overdo the pumping since it may encourage overproduction. You may only need to do this temporarily since the engorgement should decrease over time.

### Suggestions for Making and Using Cold Packs

Cold packs are used to relieve breast swelling so your milk will flow more easily. They are also used for your comfort. You may only need to use them for 1 to 2 days as needed. To make cold packs:

- Place small ice cubes in a ziplock bag. (You can also use frozen peas or corn.)
- Put ziplock bags inside a pillow case
- Wrap the cold packs around your breasts



- Alternate cold packs by placing them on your breasts for 20 minutes, take them off 20 minutes, put back on 20 minutes, take off 20 minutes, etc.
- Use cold packs between feeding or pumping sessions as you need them

If you are using frozen peas or corn, they can be put back in the freezer to refreeze and use later on your breasts. Do not eat the peas or corn after they have been thawed and refrozen.

### Reverse Pressure Softening

Reverse pressure softening (RPS) is a technique used to help baby latch on when your nipples and areolas (brown area around your nipples) are swollen from engorgement. Reverse pressure softening will push the fluid away from your nipple and areola briefly so that your baby can latch on more easily.

#### Follow these steps:

- Place your fingers and thumb around the base of your nipple on the areola
- Push back toward your ribs
- Continue putting pressure on that area for 1 to 2 minutes (should not be painful)
- You can repeat this technique and reposition your fingers farther away from your nipple on the areola if needed to relieve more swelling
- When you remove your fingers and thumb, your baby should be able to latch on the softened area

If you are still having difficulty, try pumping for 1 to 2 minutes to relieve fullness in nipples and areolas, then try latching baby on.

**Note:** You may need to follow this care plan for 24–48 hours until engorgement is gone. Call the TriHealth Breastfeeding Care Center (513 862 7867 option 3) if engorgement is not relieved by these suggestions. If your symptoms worsen, call your doctor.

### Reverse Pressure Softening



Short Nails



Long Nails