

## Engorged Breasts

Within the first two to three days after you have given birth, you may discover that your breasts feel swollen, tender, throbbing, lumpy, and overly full. Sometimes, the swelling will extend all the way to your armpit, and you may run a low fever as well.

### The causes

Within 72 hours of giving birth, an abundance of milk will come in or become available to your baby. As this happens, more blood will flow to your breasts and some of the surrounding tissue will swell. The result is full, swollen, engorged breasts.

Not every postpartum mom experienced true engorgement. Some women's breasts become only slightly full, while others find their breasts have become amazingly hard. Some women will hardly notice the pain, as they are involved in other things during the first few days.

### Treating it

Keep in mind, engorgement is a positive sign that you are producing milk to feed to your baby. Until you produce the right amount:

1. Wear a supportive nursing bra, even at night - making sure it isn't too tight.
2. Breast feed often, every 2 - 3 hours if you can. Try to get the first side of your breasts as soft as possible. If your baby seems satisfied with just one breast, you can offer the other at the next feeding.
3. Avoid letting your baby latch on and suck when the areola is very firm. To reduce the possibility of nipple damage, you can use a pump until your areola softens up.
4. Avoid pumping milk except when you need to soften the areola or when your baby is unable to latch on. Excessive pumping can lead to the over production of milk and prolonged

engorgement.

5. To help soothe the pain and relieve swelling, apply cold packs to your breasts for a short amount of time after you nurse. Crushed ice in a plastic bag will also work.

6. Look ahead. You'll get past this engorgement in no time and soon be able to enjoy your breast feeding relationship with your new baby.

Engorgement will pass very quickly. You can expect it to diminish within 24 - 48 hours, as nursing your baby will only help the problem. If you aren't breast feeding, it will normally get worse before it gets better. Once the engorgement has passed, your breasts will be softer and still full of milk.

During this time, you can and should continue to nurse. Unrelieved engorgement can cause a drop in your production of milk, so it's important to breast feed right from the start. Keep an eye for signs of hunger and feed him when he needs to be fed.

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