

## Breast Engorgement

Engorgement means that there is an excessive build-up of milk within the breast

### Causes of Breast Milk Engorgement

:

- Your baby is not breastfeeding frequently enough
- Your baby is not latching onto your breast correctly
- Your baby's time at the breast is being restricted
- Blocked milk ducts

Treatment for engorgement usually resolves extreme symptoms within 24-48 hours but if not treated promptly can take 7 – 14 days or longer. It is important that engorgement is treated in order to prevent both mastitis and a decreased milk supply.

### How to tell the difference between full breasts and engorgement:

Full Breasts	Engorged Breasts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm</li> <li>• Firm</li> <li>• Tender</li> <li>• Heavy</li> <li>• Some marbling may be seen</li> <li>• Milk flows easily</li> <li>• No Fever</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hot</li> <li>• Hard/Tight</li> <li>• Painful</li> <li>• Shiny</li> <li>• Oedematous/Swollen</li> <li>• Milk not flowing</li> <li>• May have a fever</li> </ul>
<b>THIS IS NORMAL</b>	<b>THIS IS NOT NORMAL</b>

**Management to Prevent and Minimise the risk of engorgement:**

- Keep mother and baby together after birth unless medically indicated and encourage early frequent feeding
- Allow baby to feed from one breast for as long as they want prior to offering the second breast.
- If the mother is unable to breastfeed or wishing to express milk ensure that this is done 2-3 hourly.

**Treatment for engorgement:**

- Respond to early feeding cues
- Apply heat **briefly** prior to breastfeeding or expression; this can be done by having a warm shower or a warm flannel for 1-2 minutes. This will help relax and stimulate your milk flow.
- Gently massage the breasts from the chest wall to the areola paying particular attention to the most engorged areas.
- You may find that you need to soften the area around the nipple to allow baby to get a deep and effective latch. You can do this by hand expressing off a little milk to soften the area.
- Ask someone to check you latch
- Allow your baby to feed from the breast for as long as they wish prior to offering the other breast
- If you are still feeling full after baby has finished at the breast, express until your breast feels softer and more comfortable
- Apply an ice cold compress wrapped in a cloth for **no longer** than 20 minutes post feed.

Post treatment for engorgement your breasts will feel less full as the swelling has gone away however this is normal and will not mean that you are losing your lactation.

***Any concerns please speak to a health professional.***

**References:** [www.kellymom.com/bf/concerns/mother/engorgement](http://www.kellymom.com/bf/concerns/mother/engorgement)

[www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/support-for-parents/engorgement](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/support-for-parents/engorgement)