



## ENGORGEMENT

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A few days after your baby's birth, your milk increases or "comes in." Some breast fullness is normal then. But engorgement, which can happen in the first week after birth, goes beyond normal fullness.

When a mother is engorged, her breasts become full, firm, hard, and hot and may even be painful.

Some think engorgement is caused by too much milk. But it is really caused by fluid build-up in the breast.

If the milk is not drained often and well, extra blood, lymph, and other fluids build-up in the breast. Lots of IV fluids during labour can also be a factor.

### TO PREVENT ENGORGEMENT:

- From birth, breastfeed at least 8-12 times a day. If the baby is not feeding well, use a hospital-grade rental breast pump to drain the breast this often. (Go to [www.ameda.co.nz](http://www.ameda.co.nz), Products—Breast Pumps)
- Be sure when breastfeeding that your baby latches on deeply. This feels better and helps your baby drain the breast more fully.
- Avoid bottles and pacifiers. Keep your baby at your breast for all suckling.

### TO TREAT ENGORGEMENT:

- If needed, express some milk before feeding to make it easier for your baby to latch-on.
- Apply warmth right before feeding to aid milk flow.
- Breastfeed at least every 90 minutes to two hours during the day and at least every two to three hours at night until engorgement is gone.
- Use breast massage or compression during feedings to more fully drain your breasts.
- Let warm water run over your breasts in the shower. Leaking relieves pressure.
- If your breasts still feel full after feedings, use a breast pump to drain your breasts fully.
- Apply cold — gel ice packs or bags of frozen peas, wrapped in cloth — after feedings for 10-15 minutes to

You may also try applying green cabbage leaves to your breasts between feedings to help relieve pain and swelling. To do this, put a chilled cabbage leaf in your bra for 15-30 minutes, two to three times per day. Using it more often may reduce milk supply. Avoid cabbage if you're allergic to cabbage or sulfa drugs, or if you develop a skin rash.

Be sure to treat engorgement before it gets painful. Severe pressure and swelling can cause breast damage. If these methods do not bring you relief, seek help right away from a doctor, board-certified lactation consultant or other knowledgeable healthcare provider.

*This is general information and does not replace the advice of your physician or healthcare provider.*

*If you have a problem you cannot solve quickly, seek help right away.*

*Every baby is different, and your baby may not be average.*

*If in doubt, contact your physician or other healthcare provider.*