

E Nurture

A newsletter for mothers

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Engorgement Care When Not Breastfeeding

Ice or cold packs to breasts to decrease the swelling. Part of the engorgement is increased blood flow to the breasts to bring the nutrients necessary to make milk. Ice or cold packs, like you use on a sprained ankle or injury, will reduce the swelling and make the breasts more comfortable. Hot compresses and hot showers will draw more blood into the breast and increase the swelling and engorgement, so use cold applications instead.

Leaking can relieve some of the fullness. The other part of engorgement is the increased milk production. The amount of milk the breasts make is controlled by how much is removed. The more you remove, the more you will make. Leaking is a "pressure-relief-valve" that will help to make you a little more comfortable. Do not try to pump or express to empty the breasts because you will just encourage your body to keep making milk.

Remove only small amounts of milk. Some women will express a small amount of milk from the breasts for a day or two, not enough to empty them, but enough to provide some relief from the pressure of over-full breasts. This may prolong the milk production for a few days, but they may be more comfortable days. If you choose to do this, remove only as much as necessary to provide relief - perhaps just one-half ounce or less at a time.

Engorgement usually lasts for about 48 hours. When you notice the breasts filling, engorgement usually continues to build for 24 hours, then levels-off, and begins to resolve over the next 24 hours. Cold compresses, a bra that is supportive but not restrictive, and acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, etc.) will provide relief.

Occasionally a mom will need extra help dealing with engorgement. If you have questions about this or any other aspect of breastfeeding, call the lactation consultants at The Family Birth Place at Park Ridge Hospital.

Breastfeeding Helpline
(585) 368-4033

Family Birth Place at
Park Ridge Hospital

 Unity Health System
www.unityhealth.org