Comfort Measures for Postpartum Engorgement of the Breasts

After your baby is born, your breasts start making more milk. On the 3rd day after birth, your breasts may feel hard and swollen. Engorgement feels like a crisis, but luckily, it is only a short-term problem. It usually begins by the 3rd day after birth and resolves within a couple of days.

Suggestions

**Feed Your Baby**
- Wake your baby for feeding every 2 hours if needed.

**Apply Warmth**
- Take a warm shower or tub bath. In the tub or shower, massage your breasts and let the milk flow out. Then wrap your breasts in warm, wet washcloths. Cover with plastic wrap or disposable diapers to keep the warmth in.
- Dip your breasts in a basin of warm water. Let the milk flow out.

**Try Massage**
- Gently massage your breasts and try to release some of the extra milk by squeezing with your hand. Compress your whole breast.
- Use an electric massager on a “vibrate” setting.
- Roll a smooth cylinder, like a jar or a rolling pin, from your underarm to your nipple.
- Compress your areola with your fingers. This will soften it to help your baby latch on.

**After Nursing**
- Apply cool compresses. Use gel packs made for this purpose, a bag of frozen peas, wet washcloths chilled in the freezer, or cold, raw cabbage leaves.
• Wear a bra if it fits well and feels good. Do not wear one if it digs into you and leaves red marks! If you have a stretch bra that is designed for exercise, try wearing it during the day. And, wear it to bed if the pain is keeping you awake at night.

• Wear a protective cover, such as breast shells, to let some of the milk leak out.

• Take a pain reliever like ibuprofen (such as Motrin or Advil). This relieves pain and also reduces swelling.

Note: While you are still bleeding from your vagina, avoid aspirin because it can increase bleeding.

If All Else Fails

• Use a hospital-quality electric breast pump to remove the extra milk. This is not your first choice, unless your baby cannot breastfeed.

Questions?
If you have tried the suggestions in this handout and the engorgement is not relieved within 24 hours, call Lactation Services at 206-598-4628.