

## Comfort Measures for Breast Engorgement

*What you can do*

### What is engorgement?

On about the 3rd day after birth, your breasts may feel hard and swollen. This is called *engorgement*. It may feel like a crisis, but most times it only lasts a couple of days. It usually resolves as your milk begins to flow more readily.

### Tips

#### Feed Your Baby

If you can, wake your baby for feeding every 2 hours. Nursing more often may help ease breast engorgement.

#### Warm Water

Take a warm shower or bath. While you are 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.

You can also dip your breasts in a basin of warm water. Let the milk flow out.

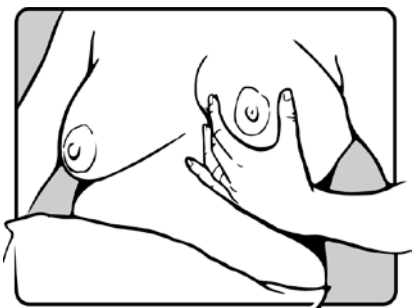
#### Massage and Hand Expression

Gently massage and compress your breasts (not just your nipples) and try to release some of the extra milk. Try one of these methods:

- With your hand scooped under your breast, place your finger and thumb on the edge of your areola in a “U” shape (see drawing on the next page). While pressing your fingers and hand into your breast, move your fingers toward your thumb and hold for a few seconds. Repeat this motion several times to start milk dripping



*Nursing more often may help ease breast engorgement.*



Hand at breast in a “U” shape.

or flowing. Then move your thumb and finger to a “C” position and repeat.

- 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.

There is a helpful online video about breast massage and hand expression at <http://bfmedneo.com/our-services/breast-massage>.

### After Nursing

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

If nothing works to ease engorgement, use a hospital-quality electric breast pump to remove extra milk. If your baby is nursing well, you may only need to do this once or twice. If your baby is not nursing well, pumping every 2 to 3 hours will help you keep up your milk supply.

**Now, please go back to the Table of Contents in this workbook and check the box so your nurses will know you have read this chapter.**

### Questions?

If you have tried the tips in this handout and your engorgement is not relieved within 24 hours, call Lactation Services at 206.598.4628.