

# Breast Feeding - Engorgement

Engorgement is caused by increased blood flow, swelling and milk produced in the breast. Engorgement usually occurs between the third and fifth day after delivery. It can also occur if the breast is not emptied when your baby breast feeds. For some mothers, the breasts become only slightly full. For other mothers, the breasts become very full, tender and lumpy. Engorgement can cause the nipple to flatten temporarily. This may make it hard for your baby to latch well. The following instructions can help relieve engorgement-usually in about 1 to 2 days.

## If your baby is able to breast feed:



- Apply a warm, wet washcloth to your breasts or take a warm shower immediately before each feeding. Reusable warm packs may also be used.
- Gently massage and stroke the breast toward the nipple to help the milk flow.
- If your nipple is flat, hand express or use a breast pump to express breast milk to soften the areola (brown area around nipple). This will make it easier for your baby to latch on to the breast.
- Nurse your baby frequently (every 1½ -3 hours) or pump every 2-3 hours. Be sure your baby is actively sucking. If your baby is not interested or not actively sucking by three hours, you will need to pump and feed your baby by bottle.
- Do not spend longer than 20 to 30 minutes attempting to feed your baby.
- Feed your baby in a quiet, relaxing place.

## If your baby is not able to breast feed:



- Apply a warm, wet wash cloth or warm pack to your breasts or take a warm shower before pumping.
- Gently massage and stroke the breast toward the nipple to help the milk flow.
- Pump in a quiet, relaxing place.
- Pump with a high quality double set-up electric breast pump.
- If you do not have a breast pump, use both hands around the breast to hand express the breast milk. (See Care Card Breastfeeding: Hand/Mechanical Milk Expression)
- Pump or hand express every 2-3 hours for 10 to 15 minutes.

See the back of this sheet for OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

## Other helpful tips...



- If using an electric breast pump, start with the suction on minimum. Only increase if the suction is comfortable for you.
- If using an electric breast pump, be sure the breast shield (the piece that goes against the breasts) fits properly. If you feel it does not fit well, call a lactation consultant.
- Be sure to wear a supportive bra. Underwire bras are not recommended.
- Take a pain reliever for discomfort. Consult with your health care provider first.
- Cool compresses or chilled cabbage leaves placed on the breasts may be used after feeding or pumping.
- Engorgement usually improves within 24 hours following the above steps. Please call your breastfeeding specialist if the engorgement continues.

**Call the Children's Mercy Hospital Lactation Management Program Help Line at (816) 346-1309 if you have questions or concerns.**