

RELIEVING BREAST ENGORGEMENT

As mature milk comes in three to seven days after delivery, normal breast fullness is caused by increased blood and lymph circulation, as well as an accumulation of milk. The breasts will feel full and remain compressible, enabling baby to latch on and suckle efficiently. If baby is not breastfeeding frequently to soften the breast, breast fullness will become breast engorgement.

Engorged breasts are typically swollen, hard and painful, and a low-grade fever is also likely. Baby will find it difficult to latch on to a severely engorged breast, and your discomfort will increase because baby cannot feed and relieve the pressure. Cabbage leaves may help.

CABBAGE LEAVES

- ▶ Remove large leaves from a chilled, crisp head of green cabbage, rinse and pat dry.
- ▶ Remove the large vein on each leaf.
- ▶ Gently crumple the leaves with your hands to break the veins.
- ▶ Apply the leaves over the engorged breasts and/or under the arms, as needed.
- ▶ Apply cabbage leaves at the first sign of fullness.
- ▶ Wear a comfortable bra that is not too tight to provide support and to hold the cabbage leaves in place.
- ▶ Change leaves about every two hours or when they become limp or wilted.
- ▶ Once the milk begins to drip or your breasts feel different, remove the leaves.
- ▶ Try to breastfeed or use a breast pump to get the milk flowing.
- ▶ Reapply cabbage leaves as needed until breasts are soft and comfortable. It may take up to six hours for the treatment to be effective and 24 to 48 hours for the breasts to completely soften. There is no benefit to using cabbage leaves longer than necessary.
- ▶ Only proceed with cabbage leaf treatment if no known sensitivity or reaction to cabbage has been noted in the past, such as a rash.

 **Lactation Consultant**
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ADDITIONAL COMFORT MEASURES DURING ENGORGEMENT INCLUDE:

- ▶ Hand express, pump or breastfeed baby every two hours until breasts feel better.
- ▶ Massage full areas while nursing to help soften the breasts to increase flow.
- ▶ Take prescription or over-the-counter medications as directed by your doctor, for comfort.
- ▶ Use ice packs on breasts to help reduce swelling and decrease pain. These can be placed on top of already applied cabbage leaves.

If breast milk is flowing:

- ▶ Stand in a warm shower and let the milk flow, gently massaging breasts to help relieve pressure.
- ▶ Apply a warm compress for comfort.

Call your physician if the above measures do not help relieve engorgement within 24 hours or if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- ▶ Swollen, hard and painful breasts with red spots or streaks
- ▶ Thin, shiny and hot skin on breasts
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms, such as body aches, fever or weakness