



## Engorgement

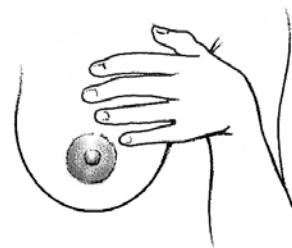
Engorgement is when breasts become too full with milk and fluid.

### You may see these signs for mother

- breasts are swollen, hard and tender
- nipples may become flat

### You may see these signs for baby

- may have a hard time latching
- may slip off the breast



### How to prevent

- breastfeed often, 10 or more times in 24 hours including night-time feedings
- make sure you have a comfortable latch. If you need help or have questions about your baby's latch call your public health nurse
- breastfeed when baby shows early signs of hunger
- let the baby stay on the breast until breast is softer or sucking slows. Then offer the other breast
- if baby is not nursing well, express your milk 8 or more times in 24 hours

### What to do

#### Keep breastfeeding

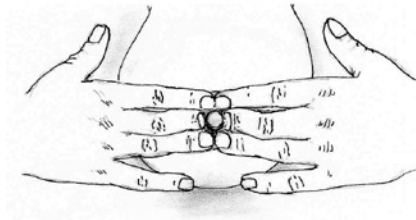
- do reverse pressure softening (see other side)
- express a small amount of milk to feel more comfortable and soften the nipple and areola
- gently massage breast while feeding baby or pumping

#### For comfort

- use a cool or cold cloth on your breast for about 20 minutes at a time. You can also use a gel pack, bag of frozen vegetables, a diaper soaked with water and chilled, or wear cold, washed green cabbage leaves inside your bra
- take a warm shower with the water hitting your back
- wear a supportive bra with no underwire
- ibuprofen is safe and can help with pain. Read product directions before using



## Reverse pressure softening



Two handed, one-step method:  
Fingernails short, fingertips curved, each  
one touching the side of the nipple



One handed "flower hold":  
Fingernails short, fingertips curved,  
placed around the nipple

Illustrations by Kyle Cotterman, Reverse Pressure Softening by K. Jean Cotterman © 2008

### To soften your areola before feeding to make it easier for baby to latch on

- place fingers around nipple as shown. Press inward toward chest wall. Count slowly to 50. It is okay if milk comes out
- pressure should be steady, firm and gentle enough to avoid pain
- if breasts are very large or very swollen, lie down on your back and count slowly while pressing
- get a small amount of milk out of your breast before feeding by hand expressing or pumping
- if using an electric pump, use a low setting

Note: do not do this if you are having pain or if you have plugged ducts or mastitis

### How long before it gets better?

- engorgement should only last a few days at most. If it lasts longer than a few days for you, get help from your public health nurse, lactation consultant or other health care provider

**Vancouver Coastal Health is committed to helping women successfully breastfeed.  
Please call your local Public Health Unit for additional information.**

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**Other information on parenting are available  
at your local Community Health Office/Centre  
or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>**

You can get further information about breastfeeding from:

Public Health Nurse or Community Dietitian

at Vancouver Coastal Health..... [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

Baby's Best Chance..... [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/parenting](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/parenting)

VCH Parenting Website .....<http://parenting.vch.ca/>

HealthLinkBC .....8-1-1

Translation services are available in 130 languages..... [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

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