



# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Breast Engorgement: Care Instructions

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Breast engorgement is the painful overfilling of the breasts that can occur during breastfeeding. It usually occurs when your breasts make more milk than your baby can drink, when you are unable to breastfeed or pump, and when you stop breastfeeding your baby.

Breast engorgement can make it hard for your baby to latch on to your nipple. Your baby may then be unable to breastfeed. This makes engorgement worse.

If you are breastfeeding, engorgement should get better in 12 to 24 hours and should disappear within a few days. If you are not breastfeeding, you will get better in 1 to 5 days or when your body stops making breast milk.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

### How can you care for yourself at home?

- If your doctor gave you medicine, take it exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.

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- If your baby is having a hard time latching on, let out (express) a small amount of milk with your hands or a pump. This will help soften your nipple and make it easier for your baby to latch on.
- If your breasts are uncomfortably full, pump or express breast milk by hand just until they are comfortable. Do not empty your breasts all the way. Releasing a lot of milk will cause your body to produce larger amounts of milk. This can make breast engorgement worse.
- Gently massage your breasts to help milk flow during breastfeeding or pumping.
- Apply a frozen wet towel, cold gel or ice packs, or bags of frozen vegetables to your breasts for 15 minutes at a time every hour as needed. (Put a thin cloth between the ice pack and your skin.)
- Avoid tight bras that press on your breasts. A tight bra can cause blocked milk ducts.

## To prevent breast engorgement

- Put a warm, wet washcloth on your breasts before breastfeeding. This may help your breasts "let down," increasing the flow of milk. Or you can take a warm shower or use a heating pad set on low. (Never use a heating pad in bed, because you may fall asleep and burn yourself.)
- Change your baby's position occasionally to make sure that all parts of your breasts are emptied.
- Make sure your baby is latched on properly.
- Talk to your doctor or a lactation consultant about any problems you have with breastfeeding.

## When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have increased redness or swelling in your breasts.
- You have a fever.
- Your pain gets worse.
- You are not better in 2 or 3 days.

## Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **Z048** in the search box to learn more about "**Breast Engorgement: Care Instructions.**"

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