

## ENGORGEMENT & WEANING

Engorgement refers to swelling within the breast tissue, which can be painful. In some women with engorgement, the breasts become firm, flushed, warm to the touch, and feel as if they are throbbing. Some women develop a slight fever (eg, less than 101°F or 38.3°C).

### WHAT TO DO.

**Put on a sports bra** — Sports bras offer more support than regular bras and nursing bras. This added support helps reduce pain and tenderness caused by engorgement.

**Cold pack or showers** — Use of a cold compress or ice pack can be helpful in relieving the discomfort of engorgement. Heat packs or hot water bottles are not recommended to treat engorgement because this can increase tissue swelling. However, using heat and massage just before a nursing session may improve milk flow. Standing in a warm shower, allowing the spray to fall on the breasts, can promote milk release without stimulating more milk production.

**Breast pump** — It is also possible to use a breast pump to relieve engorgement, *although you should not pump for more than about two to five minutes*, as this could stimulate even more milk production. Pumps are often inefficient at removing milk during early engorgement. It is important to use the correct size flange if a breast pump is used. The flange is the piece that is held against the breast and draws the nipple in to pump milk. Using a flange that is too small can injure the nipple and cause pain. In addition, using a flange that is too small may decrease milk supply because it does not allow for adequate milk to be removed.

**Pain medications** — Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) are safe to take while breastfeeding and may be effective in treating the discomfort related to engorgement.

### TIPS FOR WEANING.

Begin weaning gradually. When you first begin weaning, replace one or two breast feedings per week with a bottle. This allows your body to slowly reduce milk production and also helps to prevent your breasts from becoming too painfully engorged.

Continue to increase bottle feedings. Week by week replace an additional one or two breast feedings with a bottle. This causes your milk production to reduce even further, resulting in fewer instances of painful engorgement.

Consider delaying weaning if:

- **Food allergies run in the family.** Some research suggests that exclusive breast-feeding for at least four months may have a protective effect for children who have a family history of food allergies. If food allergies run in your family, talk to your child's doctor about the potential benefits of delaying weaning.
- **Your child isn't feeling well.** If your child is ill or teething, postpone weaning until he or she is feeling better. You might also consider postponing weaning if you're not feeling well. You and your child are more likely to handle the transition well if you're both in good health.
- **A major change has occurred at home.** Avoid initiating weaning during a time of major change at home. If your family has recently moved or your child care situation has changed, for example, postpone weaning until a less stressful time.