

# Full Breasts

## Engorgement and Oedema

When your breasts change from making colostrum to making milk they begin to feel larger, heavier, warmer or fuller. This fullness is usually partly milk and partly 'puffiness', like the puffiness in your feet (called oedema).

Some fullness is normal, but sometimes it is a problem.

Very full breasts are uncomfortable, and are hard for a baby to latch on to. It can also be more difficult to get the milk out. Unrelieved breast fullness can lead to a slow milk production later.

### Preventing Engorgement and Oedema

Feed your baby often

Help your baby feed effectively by being in a good position - your baby's chin pushing into your breast, and head tilted back, with a big mouthful of breast (Babies can open widest when they are in the prone position – on their tummies, facing down)

### Helping your baby get milk

A little hand expression before a feed will make the breast softer and easier for your baby to latch on to.

You can also use your fingers to apply pressure to the areola area for a minute immediately before your baby latches. This is called Reverse Pressure Softening. It pushes fluid away so your baby can get a better mouthful.

When your baby is feeding, use your hands to compress your breast. A sustained 'squeeze and hold', or using the flat of your hand to apply pressure for a moment or two will help.

It can take longer for your milk to 'let down' when breasts are very full. Hand expression before the feed, and compressions during the feed will help.

You may need to get milk out of your breasts using your hands or a pump.

If using a pump, have the suction on low so your areola area doesn't become puffy. Use your hands to gently squeeze your breasts to get the milk out. Hand expression may be your better option at this time.

### Reducing Engorgement and Oedema

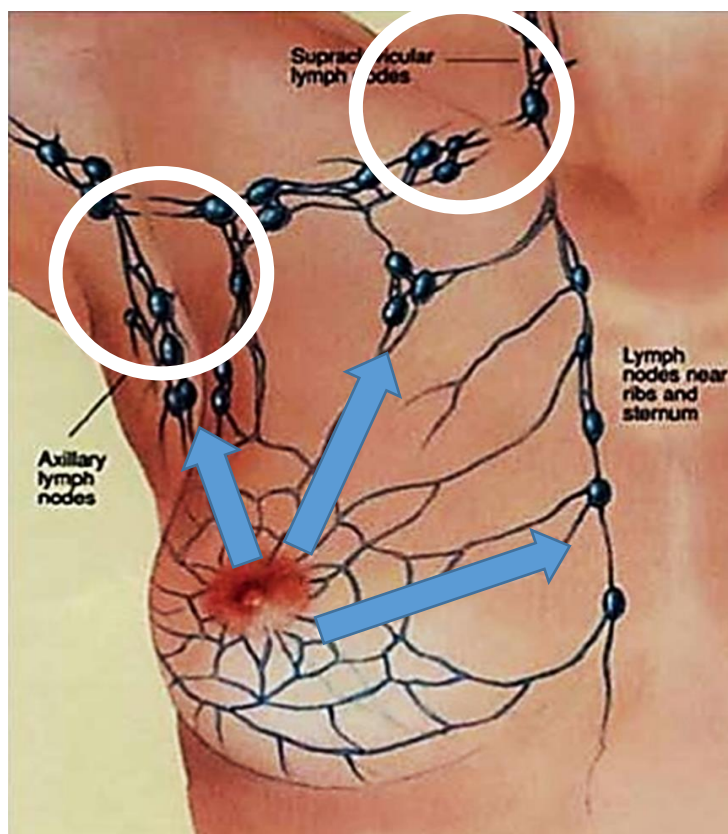
Gently massage around in circles in your armpits and at the base of your neck above your collar bone. Then gently stroke away from the nipple towards your lymph glands.

When not breastfeeding - keep your breasts cool. You can use wet cloths, or cabbage leaves, but not for longer than 20 minutes at a time.

Avoid hot showers. Heat on your breasts will increase blood flow, and make the engorgement and oedema worse.

If it is safe for you take the anti-inflammatory pain ibuprofen, 400mg 8 hourly, you may find this helpful.

PTO for additional information;



[https://kellymom.com/bf/concerns/mother/rev\\_pressure\\_soft\\_cotterman/](https://kellymom.com/bf/concerns/mother/rev_pressure_soft_cotterman/)

Reverse Pressure Softening [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1CYw1uTiG4&has\\_verified=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1CYw1uTiG4&has_verified=1)

The Basics of Breast Massage and Hand Expression <https://player.vimeo.com/video/65196007>

Breast Gymnastics for engorgement – Maya Bolman IBCLC.

[www.facebook.com/2478943535512590/photos/rpp.2478943535512590/2917138768359729/?type=3&theater](http://www.facebook.com/2478943535512590/photos/rpp.2478943535512590/2917138768359729/?type=3&theater)

Application of cabbage leaves compared to gel packs for mothers with engorgement: randomized controlled trial by DR WONG BOH BOI PhD, M.Sc. (Early Childhood Education), BSc. (Bachelor of Health Science

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Clinical Protocol #36: The Mastitis Spectrum, Revised 2022