



Call your doctor or  
breastfeeding specialist  
at anytime.

## Engorgement, Plugged Ducts, Mastitis

### Engorgement

Your breasts may feel full and swollen 2 to 4 days after your baby is born. This is called engorgement. This happens when your body switches from making small amounts of colostrum to making more milk. If your baby can't latch or if it hurts when your baby latches, there are things you can do to help yourself feel better.

- Wrap a clean towel around an ice pack and put the ice pack on your breasts for 10 to 15 minutes. If you do not have an ice pack, you can use a bag of frozen vegetables.
- Gently rub your breasts in small circles, like a breast self-exam, to make milk drip from your nipples.
- Hand express milk from your breast to make the dark part of your nipple (areola) softer.
- Put a warm, wet washcloth on your breasts for 5 to 10 minutes. If you do not see drips of breast milk coming out after 10 minutes, gently rub your breasts in small circles.
- Breastfeed more frequently. Do not go longer than 2 to 3 hours without breastfeeding or expressing milk.
- Take pain medicine if your doctor says it is okay.

If you have swelling in the areola (dark part) of your nipple, your baby might have trouble breastfeeding. You can try to fix it. Before you breastfeed, follow these steps:

- Curve your fingers to create a "bear claw" and place your fingertips around the nipple on the areola (dark part).
- Press in towards your rib cage and count slowly to 50.
- Do not press hard enough to make it hurt.
- If your breasts are large or very swollen, lie on your back while you are pressing on your breasts.

You might have to do this for 2 to 4 days before your breasts feel better.

If you use a breast pump when you are engorged, pump for short periods of time, 5 to 10 minutes at a time. If you pump for too long, you may make the engorgement worse or last longer than usual.

If your breasts still hurt after your baby is 5 days old or you feel a lump in your breast that does not go away after you breastfeed, call your doctor or breastfeeding specialist.

Find a breastfeeding specialist or support group near you by visiting [health.ri.gov/breastfeeding](http://health.ri.gov/breastfeeding)



# Engorgement, Plugged Ducts, Mastitis

## Plugged Ducts

A plugged duct will make a small lump in your breast that hurts a little. You can get plugged ducts if you wait too long to empty the milk from your breasts or if you do not empty all the milk from your breasts at each feeding.

It is good to keep breastfeeding if you have a plugged duct. If you stop breastfeeding, a plugged duct will not get better. If you get a plugged duct, do these things:

- Breastfeed or pump your breast milk often.
- Put a warm, wet washcloth on your breast or put your breast in warm water. Then gently rub the lump.
- Try different feeding positions each time you breastfeed your baby.
- When you are breastfeeding or pumping breast milk, gently rub around the lump.
- Take pain medicine if your doctor says it is okay.

If the lump does not go away after 2 days, call your doctor or breastfeeding specialist.

Call your doctor right away if you have a fever or chills. You should also call your doctor right away if the skin over the lump in your breast looks red or is hot when you touch it.

## Mastitis

Mastitis is an infection in your breast. Many women who breastfeed get mastitis. If you do, your breasts may hurt and the skin may get red and feel very hot when touched. You might also get a fever or body aches, like when you have the flu. You can get mastitis from cracked skin on your nipples, plugged ducts in your breast, yeast infections, or because not all the milk was emptied from your breasts when breastfeeding or pumping.

The most common symptoms of mastitis are:

- Swollen breasts and breasts that feel hot when you touch them.
- A lump in your breast that hurts and feels hot when you touch it.
- A red, painful, or hot "wedge-shaped" swelling on one or both breasts.
- The skin on your breasts get red streaks.
- Body aches, chills, or a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.

If you have any of these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

If you have mastitis:

- Do not stop breastfeeding or pumping your milk.
- Each time you breastfeed or pump, empty all the milk from the breast that has mastitis.
- Rest and drink plenty of water.
- Take pain medicine if your doctor says it is okay.
- If your doctor gives you a prescription, finish all the medicine. Do not stop taking the medicine when you feel better. Most medicines for mastitis are okay to take if you are breastfeeding. It is okay to ask your doctor about the medicine they want you to take.

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