



# ENGORGEMENT DURING Breastfeeding

(FULL HARD BREASTS)

In the first week after delivery, the milk becomes more abundant and the breasts feel fuller. Sometimes this change happens too quickly. As a result, the breasts may feel hard, tight, painful and warm to touch. Latching onto the breast may suddenly be too difficult for the baby.

## Prevent Engorgement

- Nurse the baby often, 8-12 times each 24 hours.
- Avoid formula or water in the early weeks unless instructed by the doctor.
- Avoid pacifiers in the first few weeks if possible.

## If Engorgement Occurs

- Cover all of both breasts with an ice pack for 3-4 minutes. (Put crushed ice cubes in a plastic bag or use a package of frozen peas wrapped in a wash cloth to make an ice pack.)
- Massage the breast, then hand express or pump out milk to soften the breast. This will make it easier to latch the baby on.
- Try nursing the baby to help empty the fullness.
- If the ice pack does not help, wrap the breast with very warm, wet towels or hand express in a warm shower with spray directed on breasts.
- Repeat the ice packs or warm soaks every 2-3 hours until the breasts are softer.

## MORE TO KNOW . . .

Hand expression can quickly soften the nipple area of the breast for a better latch.

- Massage around the breast and nipple.
- Place the fingers and thumb behind the nipple 1 to 1-1/2 inches back from the end.
- Push the fingers in toward the chest. Slowly press the thumb and fingers together.
- Move the position of the fingers and thumb around the breast to express all parts.
- Use a bowl or cup to collect the milk.

**For more help, call the county health department or the  
Arkansas WIC Breastfeeding Help-line at 1-800-445-6175.**

