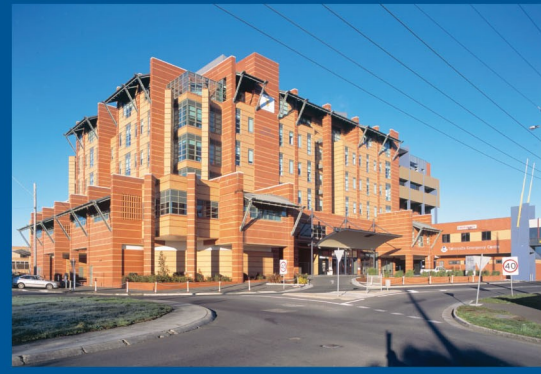


# Full Breasts



Around the third or fourth day after you give birth, your breasts start to produce lots of milk. This is known as the milk 'coming in'.

During this time, your breasts may produce much more milk than your baby needs and they may feel full and uncomfortable. This will only last for a few days. Most women feel their breasts softening from around seven days to two weeks.

## When your milk first comes in

- Your nipple and the dark area around it (the areola) may become full and firm and it may be difficult for your baby to attach properly to your breasts.
- Your baby may not take all your milk from your breasts during feeds. After feeds, your breasts may still feel quite full and uncomfortable.
- Some babies can be unsettled during this time and want to feed very frequently.
- Your baby might have lots of loose, greenish bowel motions.

### Key Point

**Keep breastfeeding your baby frequently if your breasts are very full.**

**If your breasts feel uncomfortable the following are a few things which can help to relieve your discomfort.**

- Good positioning and attachment is important – ask your midwife/nurse for help if needed.
- Hand express some milk before you attach your baby to your breasts. This will soften the areola and make it easier for your baby to attach. Ask your midwife/nurse to teach you how to hand express.
- Do 'reverse pressure softening' by holding the flat of your fingers over the nipple/areola and push in gently for a minute or two. This can help move some of the swelling away from your areola and help soften it.
- Offer one breast per feed. Don't swap sides unless the first breast feels much softer after your baby finishes feeding from it.
- If your baby asks for a top-up feed within an hour, feed again from the same breast.
- If your baby is still hungry after the first breast is 'finished', then you can offer the second breast.

- If your baby only feeds from one breast at a feed and the other breast is uncomfortably full, express a small amount of milk for comfort.
- Change the side that you begin the feed on each time you start a new feed.

***TIP: Use a hair tie on your wrist, a clip on your shirt or bra or a pin in your hair to help you remember which side you are due to feed on next.***

## Key Points

### **First Feed:**

- ⇒ Feed one side .
- ⇒ Top-up on the same side.
- ⇒ Let the other side drip or express a **small** amount for comfort.

### **Next Feed:**

- ⇒ Feed the **other** side.
- ⇒ Top-up on that same side.
- ⇒ Let the other side drip or express as before.
- ⇒ Change the side that you **begin** the feed on each time you start a new feed.



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## Relieving discomfort between feeds

- If your breasts are very uncomfortable between feeds, you may need to express a small amount of milk to relieve the fullness.
- You can also stimulate some milk to flow by placing a warm pack on your breast for a few minutes or having a warm shower or bath.
- Let some milk drip from one side into a towel or container while feeding from the other breast.
- Wear a supportive bra but make sure it doesn't dig in. Some women feel more comfortable without a bra at this time.
- Cold packs after feeds for a few minutes may help to relieve swelling and discomfort. A covered cold pack, a frozen nappy or a packet of frozen vegetables can be used for this.
- Paracetamol or ibuprofen may be taken for pain relief

### Key Point

***Once your supply has settled down and your breasts feel softer, offer both breasts at each feed again, but continue to let your baby finish the first side before offering the second.***

## Watch out for...

### Blocked Ducts

A blocked duct can cause a tender, reddish area on your breast. You may feel a small lumpy area under your skin but otherwise, you feel well.

To treat a blocked duct, apply warmth, and gently massage the lump in a circle and then towards your nipple. You can do this while feeding, expressing or in the shower or bath.

You can try positioning your baby so that his/her chin points towards the lump as this may help to clear the blockage. If the blockage does not clear within 24 hours, seek advice from one of the contact numbers below.

### Mastitis

Mastitis is a breast inflammation or infection. Your breast might be red, swollen and painful. You may develop a fever and feel unwell.

It is more common when the breasts are over-full, if feeds are missed, or if a blocked duct goes untreated. Mothers who are run-down or very tired are more prone to mastitis.

To prevent mastitis, make sure your baby is well positioned and attached, feed regularly according to

your baby's needs and try not to let your breasts become over-full. Try to rest, eat well and look after yourself.

If you think you have mastitis, seek advice from one of the contact numbers below. ***If you feel unwell you should see your local doctor or go to the Emergency Department as soon as possible.*** You may need treatment with antibiotics, however you can continue to breastfeed your baby.

### Useful contacts:

#### **The Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) 24 hour helpline**

Ph. 1800 686 268

[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

#### **Ballarat Health Service Breastfeeding Clinic**

Ph. 53204977 / 53204533

#### **Parent Place Breastfeeding Support**

Cnr Sturt and Albert Streets, Ballarat Central

Ph. 53204977 / 53206871

or drop in Thursdays 1300-1500

#### **Ballarat Health Service Maternity Unit**

Ph. 53204971

#### **24 Hour Maternal and Child Health Advice Line Ph. 132229.**

### **Author**

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