



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 ten 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.
- All of this is normal.

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

Feed your baby while your breasts are full

- Good positioning and attachment is important – ask your midwife for help with this if you need it.
- 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 to teach you how to hand express.
- Offer one breast per feed. Don't swap sides unless the first breast feels very soft after the baby finishes feeding from it.

- If your baby asks for a top-up feed within an hour, feed again from the same breast.
- If the 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 sides each time you begin a new feed.

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 the breast for a few minutes
 - 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 or a packet of frozen vegetables can be used for this.
- Paracetamol may be taken for pain relief if required. Follow instructions on the packet

Once your milk supply has settled down

- Offer both breasts at each feed again, but continue to let the baby finish the first side before offering the second.



Things to remember

First feed

- Feed from one breast.
- Top-up from the same breast if needed.
- Let the other breast drip during the feed or express a small amount for comfort.

Next feed

- Feed from the other breast.
- Top-up from the same breast.
- Let the other breast drip during the feed or a small amount for comfort.

Go back to offering both breasts at each feed when the fullness settles down.

For more information and advice

Your local Maternal & Child Health Nurse

Maternal & Child Health Line (24 hours)

Tel: 13 22 29

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Tel: 1800 686 268 – Breastfeeding Helpline

Web: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Related fact sheets

- *Breastfeeding: Expressing breast milk*