

Breast Compression

The most important thing to ensure successful breastfeeding and good weight gain in the breastfed baby is a **good latch**. However sometimes a baby may have a good latch, and be sucking, but not swallowing because of slow or poor milk flow. Some babies will tend to fall asleep at the breast when there is poor milk flow; others will pull away, and may cry. This is when it is useful to try **breast compression**.

Breast compression can help with:

- Poor weight gain in breastfed baby
- A baby who falls asleep at the breast
- A baby who wants to feed 'all the time'
- A baby who takes a long time to feed
- A colicky baby
- Sore nipples, blocked ducts, and/or mastitis

Breast compression also works well in the first few days of breastfeeding to help the baby get more colostrum.

How to do breast compression:

- Get comfortable and get the baby well latched on. Shift your arms so that you are holding the baby with one arm and hand.
- Support your breast with the other hand, encircling it so that your thumb is on top, and your other fingers below the breast, with your little finger touching your rib cage. **Your fingers and thumb should be well back from the nipple.**
- Observe how the baby is feeding: watch for the pause after the suck and listen for the swallow; the baby's mouth should open wide – pause – then close and swallow.
- When the baby is no longer doing this, but just 'nibbling' at the breast, or sucking quickly without the pause and swallow, compress your breast to increase the pressure – and the flow of milk.
- Just squeeze and hold your breast (don't roll or stroke your fingers down the breast). This should not hurt! You should now see and hear the baby swallow.
- Keep the pressure up until the baby is again sucking without swallowing, and then release the pressure (and let your hand rest). Your milk should start to flow again and the baby should start to suck and swallow again. If your baby again stops swallowing, compress your breast again.
- Continue doing this on one side until the baby does not suck and swallow even with compression. Let the baby keep feeding on this breast for another few minutes to see if you will get another 'let-down'.
- If the baby wants more, change to your other breast and do the same thing.
- **Remember: compress when the baby is sucking but not swallowing. Wait for the baby to start sucking before you start compressing!**

For more information and a video demonstration go to: www.breastfeeding.ca