Breast Massage: A Reliever for Mild Breast Engorgement

Princy Thomas¹, Manju Chhugani², Jahanara Rahman³, Neha Varun⁴

Abstract

Breast engorgement is a painful distention and congestion of the breasts which makes the mother ill and difficult for the baby to latch on to the mother’s breast. It is the condition in which there is painful swelling of the breasts with sudden increase in milk volume, vascular congestion, and oedema during the first two weeks of postnatal period.¹ Many researches are being done to check the effectiveness of breast massage on mild breast engorgement. Breast massage is helpful in reducing mild breast engorgement. The precipitating factors of breast engorgement include the poor attachment, delayed initiation of breastfeeds, decrease the duration of breastfeeding, missing baby feed, giving formula feed to the baby.²

Keywords: Breast engorgement, Breast Pain, Breastfeeding, Breast massage, Postpartum mothers

Introduction

Breast engorgement is a painful distention and congestion of the breasts which makes the mother ill and difficult for the baby to latch on to the mother’s breast. It is the condition in which there is painful swelling of the breasts with sudden increase in milk volume, vascular congestion, and edema during the first two weeks of postnatal period.¹ The precipitating factors of breast engorgement are poor attachment, delayed initiation of breastfeeds, minimum duration of breastfeeding, missing feeds, giving formula feed to the baby, etc.² Breast engorgement can hinder the development of successful breastfeeding, leading to early breastfeeding cessation, and is associated with serious illness to mother as breast infection.³ The incidence rate of breast engorgement worldwide is 1:8000 and in India it is 1:6500 women. It occurs between the third to fourth day of postpartum period.⁴ There are many management techniques available to treat breast engorgement, for example, ice pack, application of hot fomentation, breast massage, breast-binding therapy, uplifting support bra to minimize edema, applying green cabbage leaves, hand expression, breast pump, etc.⁵

Definition

Breast massage is a technique which provides circular strokes to the breast tissue from base till nipple. It will help to increase lymph and blood circulation. And it is the cheapest method to relieve mild breast engorgement.⁶ Mothers should be encouraged that before breast feeding gentle massage toward the nipple should be done to allow some milk to flow out and help to soften the nipple for easier latch.

¹M.Sc. Nursing Student, ²Principal, ³Tutor, ⁴Assistant Professor, Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Hakeem Abdul Hameed Centenary Hospital, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi.

Correspondence: Ms. Princy Thomas, Hakeem Abdul Hameed Centenary Hospital, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi.

E-mail Id: tgprincy@gmail.com

Orcid Id: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0545-0898


Digital Object Identifier (DOI): https://doi.org/10.24321/2455.9318.201703

ISSN: 2455-9318

© ADR Journals 2017. All Rights Reserved.
This technique sometimes cures inverted nipple. Massage controls the blood circulation and tissue fluid circulation. Breast massage helps in reducing breast engorgement. When breast engorgement is relieved, breast pain is also relieved.

A study was conducted by Jeongsug et al. in the year 2012 in Korea. In this study a non-equivalent control group and a pre-test post-test design was used. Postpartum mothers who had engorgement and breast pain were recruited at a postpartum care center. The experimental treatment was the application of Oketani breast massage by an Oketani massage therapist. And conventional massage technique for control group from a nurse at the postpartum care center. The study found that Oketani breast massage developed by Oketani is a painless therapy. It also separates the retro-mammary space, which is the connective tissue between the breast and the greater pectoral muscle (Oketani, 1991). Oketani breast massage alleviated breast pain.

A research conducted by Zhou et al. in China on kneading and dispersing manipulation in treatment of early-stage acute mastitis, 198 cases of acute mastitis from three respective hospitals were taken and divided into treatment group and control group. There were 99 cases in each group. The treatment group was only treated with manipulation, and Cefradine was orally administered to patients in the control group. The local breast lump size, clinical symptoms and the adverse reactions in the two groups were observed before and after the treatment. The total response rates in the treatment and control groups were 95.92% (94/98) and 80% (76/95) respectively. Kneading and dispersing manipulation has certain effects on early stage acute mastitis, and the therapy is safe and repeatable.

A research was conducted by Thomas et al. in 2016 in New Delhi. A pre-experimental study was conducted on 30 mild breast-engorged postnatal mothers. One group pre-test/post-test design was used and the level of breast engorgement was assessed. For three consecutive days, postnatal mothers were given breast massage pre and post-test. There was a significant difference in the post-test breast pain level and pre-test breast pain level as shown in the result in which mean pre-test numerical pain rating score day 1–3 was 0.88 with SD (0.94) was greater than the mean post-test numerical pain rating score day 1–3 which was 0.10 with SD (0.32) with mean difference of 0.78, which was found to be statistically significant as evident from ‘t’ value 19.7 at 0.05 level of significance. So breast massage plays a great role in relieving mild breast engorgement and breast pain if applied earlier. So, the mother should be advised about gentle breast massage before breastfeeding. Further, a well-fitted, supportive nursing bra makes the postnatal mothers feel better.

### Conclusion

The staff who are there to take care of postnatal mothers should focus on prevention of breast engorgement by encouraging the postnatal mothers to start breastfeeding as soon as possible after the birth, to give the baby time to learn to breastfeed before the breasts become full and firm, avoid the use of bottles, formula feed and once milk comes in breastfeed at least eight times in 24 hours to prevent over fullness and use hand expression or a breast pump to remove the remaining milk. If we ignore breast engorgement at its early stage it can develop into mastitis and breast abscess with cessation of breast milk production and ultimately weaning. Hence, there is a need to identify this at its early stage and begin its treatment. Breast massage is an effective method of relieving mild breast engorgement, which has no side effects and can be repeated many times a day.

### Conflict of Interest: None

### References

7. Jacob S. A study to assess the effectiveness of breast massage in the reduction of breast engorgement among postnatal mothers admitted in selected hospitals at Tumkur, Karnataka. 2012.


Date of Submission: 06th Apr. 2017
Date of Acceptance: 22nd May 2017