Chilled Cabbage Leaves: The Possible Remedy for Breast Engorgement

Rajashree Salgaonkar
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecological Nursing, College of Nursing, Bharati Vidyapeeth, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

Breast engorgement is defined as congestion and distension with fluid. The lactation literature defines it as a swollen breast, caused by the buildup of breast milk during breastfeeding, and is often referred to as swelling and distension of the breasts and can be a painful condition. This is a common physiological problem for lactating mothers that are caused by the abrupt boost in the volume of the breast milk due to lymphatic and vascular congestion with interstitial edema during the first 2 weeks of breastfeeding. The rationale why engorgement occurs in the first 2 weeks postpartum is that the mother and her baby are adjusting to the process of demand and supply, i.e., if the milk production is inflated too speedily, this might exceed the capability of the breast alveoli to store it. Breast engorgement may occur due to scarce emptying of the breast milk from the mother due to poor transfer of breast milk and incorrect latching or positioning of the baby during the course of suckling. Engorgement of the breasts is associated with severe pain, nipple tenderness, fissures of the nipple, and infection which can all result in subsequent cessation of breastfeeding. Many methods for the treatment of breast engorgement have been explored. Some of the non-medical interventions include cold cabbage compresses cold gel pads, hot compresses, and warm showers, which are used to activate the milk ejection reflex besides the use of medical treatments such as the use of diuretics. Thus, the present review focuses on the use of chilled cabbage leaves for the treatment of breast engorgement.

Keywords: Cabbage leaves, breast engorgement, breast milk

Introduction

“Mother, the most beautiful on the lips of mankind” ---- Kahilil Gibran.

Motherhood is the only act that manifested in human form the cosmic wonder of creation. Childbirth is a process beautifully designed by nature and the care following the birth of the baby also essential for the maintenance of the health of both mother and child. Childbirth is a transcendent even with meaning far beyond the actual physiologic process. The main vital consideration for the infant in tropical countries is breastfeeding and avoidance of infection. Breast milk is the food of choice for infants. Breastfeeding offers many advantages, nutritional, immunological, and psychological.[2] The primi mother and the mother within elastic breast are likely to be involved in developing breast complication. The factors that are exaggerated normal venous and lymphatic enlargement of breast which precedes lactation. This, in turn, prevents escape of milk from the lacteal system. The nipple may become pain due to loss of surface epithelium with the formation of a row area on the nipple, due to a fissure situated either at tip of the base or of the nipple.[3] The common breast complication are breast engorgement, cracked and retracted nipples, leading to difficulty in breastfeeding mastitis, breast abscess, and lactation failure. Breast engorgement and infection are responsible for puerperal pyrexia.[4] Breast fullness is a normal part of lactation which nearly all women experience when their milk comes in 2–5 days after birth. This feeling of fullness, which may be accompanied by a feeling of heaviness, tenderness, and
Breast engorgement is a painful, unpleasant condition affecting a large number of women in early postpartum. During a time, when mothers are coping with demands of the baby, it may be particularly distressing breast engorgement inhibits the development of successful breastfeeding, leading to early breastfeeding cessation, a problem associated with more serious illness including breast infection. Numerous strategies have been adopted over the years in the treatment of breast engorgement, but very few researches have been conducted to monitor the effect of cabbage leaves on breast engorgement. Cabbage leaves have been used for centuries as a folk remedy for a wide variety of ailments and received much-renewed interest from lactation professionals over the past 10 years.
It contains natural mixture of ingredients which helps to decrease tissue congestion by dilatory local capillaries in mild, moderate, and severe discomfort. Hot application reduces pain and causes relaxation of blood vessels, thereby opening vessels and increasing blood flow.

A study has conducted a quasi-experimental study in an effect of chilled cabbage leaves on the treatment of breast engorgement in Thailand. The experimental group received chilled cabbage leaf application and the controlled group received routine care. This study concluded that chilled cabbage leaf application had great improvement in treating this condition.[12]

A quasi-experimental study was conducted in Tamil Nadu to assess the effectiveness of cabbage leaves application on breast engorgement among postnatal mothers. The study comprises 24 mothers selected using purposive sampling method. Pre-treatment level of breast engorgement compared with post-treatment level and found that application of cabbage leaves to relieve breast engorgement is very effective (Bhuvaneswari, 2010).

A study was conducted in Australia to compare the effectiveness of chilled and room temperature green cabbage leaves in reducing discomfort of breast engorgement among postnatal mothers. 28 lactating women with breast engorgement used chilled cabbage leaves or on breast and room temperature cabbage leaves on other breasts for 2 h period. Pre-treatment pain level was compared with post-treatment levels for both the conditions. Mothers reported less pain with both the conditions and majority of mothers preferred cold cabbage leaves (Mrs. Diane Margaret, 2002).

**Conclusion**

Breast engorgement is one of the most common minor discomforts of the women after delivery, especially primipara. Breast engorgement is a physiological condition that is characterized by painful, swelling of the breast as a result of a sudden increase in milk volume, lymphatic and vascular congestion, and interstitial edema during the first 2 weeks following childbirth, this condition is caused by insufficient breastfeeding or obstruction in milk ducts. Breast pain during breastfeeding is a common problem that interferes with successful breastfeeding, leading to engorgement.[13] Thus, the present study was undertaken to find out the effect of cabbage leaves on relief breast engorgement among postnatal women.

**References**

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The pre- and posttreatment scores of breast engorgement and pain were recorded. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods using the statistical software STRATA. Results: 25 views. Related QuestionsMore Answers Below.

Many breastfeeding moms believe that placing cold cabbage leaves on the breasts is helpful. Researchers do not know if there is a property within the cabbage leaf itself that helps to decrease the pain and swelling, or if the inflammation goes down because the cabbage acts as a cold compress. Either way, studies show that if you're breastfeeding and you put the refrigerated leaves of a cabbage plant directly on your breasts, it's not only soothing, but it can also help lessen your breast pain and swelling. 12 views. View more.