

Nipple shields

Education on the use of nipple shields

Nipple shields are soft, silicone covers worn over your nipples during breastfeeding.

When can a nipple shield be helpful?

- If your baby cannot stay latched to your breast to feed
- When baby has been bottle feeding for some time and is learning to feed at the breast

Talk to a nurse/midwife or lactation consultant first to:

- assess breastfeeding to see if a nipple shield is needed
- assess that milk is flowing well before introducing a nipple shield, as baby will have difficulty getting colostrum through the shield if it is introduced early
- advise you on the right size/type of nipple shield to buy
- demonstrate and help you to practice applying the nipple shield

It is recommended to have regular follow up of breastfeeding if you continue using a nipple shield following discharge from hospital. This is to review how breastfeeds are progressing and to offer advice about when to stop using the nipple shield.

How to apply a nipple shield

- Wash or sanitise your hands before handling a clean nipple shield
- Express a little of your breast milk onto the nipple shield's tip (this helps baby to smell and taste your milk when trying to latch)
- Hold the nipple shield with the "nipple" section facing outward away from you
- Grasp the base of the shield between your thumbs and remaining fingers of both hands, and stretch the shield outwards while placing it over the nipple
- Make sure the nipple shield is "centred" on your nipple
- Flatten the edges (the "brim") of the shield over your areola
- There will be a small gap between the tip of your nipple and the inside tip of the shield – if your nipple touches the inside tip of the shield, it is too small

Positioning your baby and breastfeeding with a nipple shield

- Place baby on your chest as you would in response to feeding cues (early signals from baby that they are getting ready to feed), allow baby to "search" for your breast and to open their mouth widely
- Gently hold the nipple shield in place with your fingers spread wide over the edges of the shield, to reduce the chance of the shield moving while baby is latching at the breast
- Slightly point the shield upwards towards the roof of baby's mouth
- Look for signs of a deep latch – baby has a wide mouth when latching, cheeks touching the breast and held close to your body to prevent baby "sliding off" onto the tip of the nipple shield
- Listen and look to see that your baby is swallowing and receiving a good flow of milk through the nipple shield



Consumers contributed
to this information.

- At the end of the feed your nipple should not look “pinched” or be sore

After the breastfeed

- Wash the nipple shield in warm, soapy water, rinse with clean water, dry the shield with a paper towel and store it in a clean, dry container
- Most mothers will need to express some milk after breastfeeds, at least initially, to make up for the reduced breast stimulation and possible low milk production that can occur due to the barrier of the nipple shield between the breast and baby’s mouth
- The plan developed between you and your nurse/midwife/lactation consultant as to how often and how long to continue expressing will depend on how well baby is removing milk from the breast and will vary depending on your individual circumstances
- If baby does not require the additional expressed breast milk, store it in case it is needed at another time (Information on breast milk storage times can be found in the “Child Health Information Your guide to the first 12 months” booklet)
- Have your baby checked and weighed about every 3 days initially, until baby has demonstrated a normal feeding and growth pattern

How to know if the nipple shield is working well for you and your baby

- As your milk flow increases (around 3-6 days) baby will be having at least 6 heavy, clear wet nappies and at least 2 or more soft yellow poos each day
- Your baby can get all the milk needed through the shield, receiving some additional expressed breast milk if necessary
- Your baby is growing well and meeting milestones

When to stop using the nipple shield

- Continue to use the nipple shield for as long it helps you and your baby to breastfeed
- Be guided by discussion with your midwife/nurse, child health nurse or lactation consultant
- It is important to have regular follow up appointments with a health care professional whilst using a nipple shield

Some tips to try when you are ready to breastfeed without a nipple shield

- Allow plenty of time for skin-to-skin cuddles
- Offer breast without shield at times when baby is calm or soon after waking from a sleep
- Before offering your breast without the shield, hand express some milk to soften behind your nipple and gently roll your nipple, or use a breast pump, to make your nipple more erect
- Another alternative is to start the feed with the nipple shield on and remove it part way through the breastfeed
- Attempts to breastfeed without the shield should never be lengthy or upsetting to you or your baby. If baby becomes upset, reapply the nipple shield and continue to feed with it in place
- For more advice on feeding without the nipple shield, talk with your midwife/nurse, child health nurse or lactation consultant
- The Australian Breastfeeding Association has information on nipple shields, including a video on how to use a nipple shield and tips to wean off it <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/nipple-shields> or call the helpline on 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 268)

For More Information

- Call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and ask to speak with a child health nurse
- Queensland Health booklet “Child Health Information Your guide to the first 12 months”
- Queensland Health Breastfeeding website: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/breastfeeding/>
- Australian Breastfeeding Association helpline 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 268) <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>