

Nipple Shields

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

When may 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 required
- demonstrate and help you to practice applying the nipple shield
- advise you on the right size/type of nipple shield to buy
- 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

It is recommended to have a follow up review of feeding following discharge from hospital if you continue using a nipple shield.

How to apply a nipple shield

- Wash 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 thumb and remaining fingers of both hands, and stretch the shield outwards
- Place the shield over your nipple, making sure it 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

- Bring your baby to your breast as you would in response to feeding cues
- Allow baby to open their mouth widely while "searching" for the breast, bringing baby in close and onto the breast
- 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 during the feed
- Slightly point the shield upwards towards the roof of baby's mouth
- Check that your baby is not just sucking on the tip of the nipple shield, baby should be right up against your breast
- Hold baby close to your body to prevent baby "sliding off" onto the tip of the nipple shield
- Your baby may take a little time to adjust to sucking with the nipple shield
- Listen and look to see that your baby is swallowing and receiving a good flow of milk through the nipple shield
- At the end of the feed your nipple should not look "pinched" or be sore



National Standard 2. Partnering with Consumers
Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this publication

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 feeds, 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)
- Check your breasts regularly for signs of blocked ducts which may suggest your breasts are not draining well
- 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

- After your milk "comes in" (at 4-6 days) baby is 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 for when you are ready to try feeding 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
- Start feed with nipple shield on and remove it part way through the breastfeed
- 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 it more erect
- 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, or call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or the Australian Breastfeeding Association helpline 1800 mum 2 mum (1800 686 268)

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>

For More Information

- 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/>