



Nipple shields

Nipple Shields are soft, silicone, “nipples” that are worn over your nipple during breastfeeding.

When may a nipple shield be helpful?

- If your baby cannot attach directly or effectively to your breast
- If your preterm baby is having difficulty staying attached to your breast

Talk to a nurse/midwife or lactation consultant first

This will enable:

- your nurse/midwife to assess breastfeeding and determine whether a nipple shield is required
- an assessment to advise you on the right size/type of nipple shield to buy if one is needed
- demonstration and practice in applying the nipple shield whilst your nurse/midwife is present
- milk flow to be checked - it is important that milk is flowing well before you introduce a nipple shield
- your nurse/midwife to offer and arrange support for you once you have left hospital

How to apply a nipple shield

Read accompanying product information regarding specific brand instructions. Alternatively:

- express a little breast milk around the outside “tip” of the nipple shield to help entice your baby,
- hold the nipple shield with the “nipple” section facing outward away from you,
- grasp the base of the “nipple” section between thumb and fingers,
- stretch the base of the nipple shield and centre over your nipple then,
- flatten the edges of the shield over your areola.

Positioning your baby and breastfeeding with a nipple shield

- Bring your baby to your breast and shield as you would normally in response to feeding cues
- Hold the nipple shield in place with your opposite hand, fingers spread wide over the circular base of the shield
- As your baby's bottom lip and chin sink into the rim of the shield, well below the nipple, baby's top lip will glide over the upper surface of the shield enabling your baby to take a big mouth full
- Check that your baby is not just sucking on the tip of the nipple shield, baby's lips should be right up against your breast
- Hold baby facing you and in close to your body to prevent baby “sliding off” onto the tip of the nipple
- Your baby may take a little time to adjust to sucking with the nipple shield
- It may be necessary to entice baby by gently compressing breast to express some milk into shield
- Listen and look to see that your baby is receiving a good flow of milk through the nipple shield

After the breastfeed

- Wash and store the nipple shield as per manufacturers recommendation
- Most mothers will need to express some milk after feeds, at least initially, to make up for the possibility of less milk removal
- The initial plan developed between you and your nurse/midwife/lactation consultant regarding frequency of expressing will vary depending on your individual circumstances
- The length of time for which expressing will need to continue after breastfeeds will depend on how well your baby is removing the milk
- If baby does not require additional expressed breast milk, store in case it is needed at another time
- 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 your baby has demonstrated a normal feeding and growth pattern

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

- You are feeling happy and confident with breastfeeding
- Your baby is able to get all the milk needed through the shield or is receiving some additional expressed breast milk when necessary
- Your baby is growing well

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

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

- Allow plenty of time for skin-to-skin cuddles, holding your baby close to your breast
- Start feed with nipple shield on, after a few minutes of sucking, and with little disturbance to baby's position, detach baby from the breast, swiftly remove the nipple shield and in response to baby's cues, offer the breast again – this time without the shield on
- Before offering your breast without the shield, hand express some milk to soften behind your nipple and gently roll your nipple to make it more erect or use a breast pump
- Offer breast without shield at ideal times i.e., when baby is hungry but calm and you feel 'up for the challenge'

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/>



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Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this publication.