

Using nipple shields



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

A nipple shield may help you breastfeed if you have flat or inverted nipples and/or your baby is not latching directly to the breast

Nipple shields are normally a short-term solution. It is important you get support from your Midwife, Child and Family Health Nurse or Lactation Consultant while you are using a nipple shield to make sure it is working well.

For you to use a nipple shield you must have:

- A good milk supply. There will be problems with milk moving through the shield until your milk 'comes-in', usually by the fourth or fifth day. You may need to express until then.
- A good breastfeeding technique.
- Know how to check if your baby is swallowing and getting milk.

HOW TO USE

- 1 Express a small amount of milk into the opening of the nipple shield.
- 2 Stretch the base of the opening of the shield over the nipple. As the stretched shield returns to its normal shape, it will draw your nipple in. The shield should be stable and not slip up and down. This will help your baby breastfeed more easily.
- 3 Sit so you and your baby are facing each other with your baby's chest close to your breast or body.
- 4 Wait for the moment when your baby opens their mouth wide, then bring your baby to your breast.

FEEDING TIPS

It should look like your baby is feeding straight from the breast, as if the shield is not there.

When your baby comes off the breast during a feed, milk should be visible in the nipple shield.

If you think that your baby did not feed well, you may need to hand express or use a breast pump to obtain more milk and give this milk with a spoon or a cup.

CLEANING

After use: Wash in warm, soapy water. Force water through the holes to remove milk residue. Rinse in cold water.

Storage: Place in a clean, dry container with a lid.

- 5 Keep your fingers away from the edge of the nipple shield to give your baby plenty of room to attach.
- 6 Ensure that your baby's mouth is wide around the nipple shield so the chin and tongue action stimulate the ducts behind the nipple.
- 7 Check that your baby's mouth is wide open and that their lips are not just on the teat part of the nipple shield. Your baby's mouth should not be sliding up and down on the shaft of the shield.

RETURNING TO DIRECT BREASTFEEDING

You might only need to use a nipple shield for a short period of time. Your nipple will soften and lengthen over time and you and your baby will also become better at breastfeeding.

If you are discharged home from hospital while still using a nipple shield, the midwife will refer you to your Child and Family Health Nurse for ongoing breastfeeding assistance.

Before you see the Nurse you may decide to try feeding baby without the nipple shield.

Here are some tips:

- Choose a time of day when both you and baby are relaxed.
- Attach your baby as you have been doing using the shield.
- Feed for a short time (a few minutes) and wait for good, strong sucking.

- Quickly remove the shield and try to position baby directly onto your breast.
- Repeat the above steps several times as needed.
- Success may take some time and patience. If you or your baby gets upset, try again later.

Occasionally, some women need to use a nipple shield for a longer period of time. Continue to use it if you and your baby are happy, your baby is thriving and breastmilk supply is maintained.

OTHER ISSUES WHEN USING NIPPLE SHIELDS

- A lower milk supply can result from reduced breast stimulation. If this happens to you, feed more often.
- Ensure adequate drainage of your breasts to avoid mastitis.
- Infection can happen if the nipple shield is not cleaned well. Clean and store as suggested.
- Your baby will only breastfeed with the shield in place.
- Nipple shields can be used instead of resting your nipples or expressing, but if you have sore, grazed or cracked nipples, care needs to be taken. Put the shield on correctly and focus on correcting your breastfeeding technique to prevent further damage. Follow up at your Child and Family Health Centre for ongoing breastfeeding assistance.

Success may take some time and patience. If you or your baby gets upset, try again later.

Contacts

- Your local Maternity Unit.
- Your Child and Family Health Centre.
- Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline
Ph: **1800 686 268**, 7 days a week, or visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- MotherSafe (Medications in Pregnancy & Lactation Service)
Ph: **(02) 9382 6539** or **1800 647 848** if outside the Sydney Metropolitan area.
- For a Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)
www.lcanz.org/find-a-consultant.htm
- After-hours telephone advice lines are listed in your baby's *Personal Health Record* (Blue Book).

References

Eat for Health, NHMRC Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers 2012.
McKechnie A & Eglash A (2010) Nipple Shields: a review of the literature. *Breastfeeding Medicine*, 5(6): 309-314.
Riordan J & Auerback K (2010) (Eds) *Breastfeeding and Human Lactation*. 4th Edition Jones and Bartlett.