

Nipple Shield

A nipple shield is a silicone cover you place over your nipple when you are breastfeeding your baby. It has tiny holes so your breastmilk can pass through while your baby is latched on. It may help with some breastfeeding problems.

Follow your board-certified lactation consultant's guidance for using nipple shields. Your nurse and lactation consultant will work closely with you to make sure you use the nipple shield correctly.

Reasons for using nipple shields

Breastfeeding with nipple shields is a temporary solution for some breastfeeding problems. A deep latch will help your baby get the most breastmilk. A nipple shield can help a baby who has a shallow latch.

Babies with the following conditions may benefit from a nipple shield:

- Premature or late preterm birth
- Trouble with latching even after interventions
- Tongue tie
- Refuses or is reluctant to breastfeed after getting bottle fed
- Trouble weaning from bottle to breast

Nipple shields are also helpful for mothers. It may help mothers with:

- Breast engorgement
- Sore, cracked and/or bleeding nipples
- Overactive breastmilk letdown that affects the flow
- Restarting breastfeeding after having stopped breastfeeding

Benefits of using nipple shields

There are different benefits to using nipple shields, including:

- Encourages a baby to feed at the breast
- Helps a baby practice and strengthen their suck at the breast
- Allows a baby to keep suction at the breast
- Helps baby to see the breast as source of feeding
- Allows better flow of breastmilk when using a nipple shield

Barriers of using nipple shields

While nipple shields can be beneficial, there could be some possible issues. Nipple shields:

- Cause less stimulation to the breast
- Create a physical barrier between the breast and the baby
- Cause a baby to depend on nipple shield for breastfeeding
- Can be easily used incorrectly
- Allow for little breastmilk transfer with nipple shields

Types of nipple shields

If you choose to use a nipple shield, you will need to find the right one for you and your baby.

- **Contact nipple shield** – A contact nipple shield allows a baby to be able to smell the mother's areola.
- **Full nipple shield** – A full nipple shield helps a baby who collapses the contact nipple shield during suckling.

How to apply a nipple shield

Learning how to use a nipple shield correctly will help you get the most benefits.

Step 1

Roll the outer nipple shield about halfway down the nipple shield shank.



Step 2

Roll the nipple shield back onto the breast so that your nipple is inside.



Step 3

Push along the edges of the nipple shield and your nipple until the tip of the nipple shield pops out.



Step 4

Use your fingers to straighten and smooth the edges of the nipple shield.



Step 5

Nipple shield is placed correctly.



Breastfeeding with with a nipple shield

Once you have the nipple shield on your breast, you are ready to breastfeed your baby. Start nursing your baby with the nipple shield in place.

1. Hold your baby in a position that gives full support of their head (such as a football or cross-cradle hold).
2. Latch your baby to your breast by tipping their head back.
3. Touch the nipple shield above the baby's upper lip so they can latch deeply.
4. Make sure your baby's lips are at the **base of the nipple shield, on the areola** and not bouncing back and forth.

When you start breastfeeding using a nipple shield, your baby's sucks might be irregular. This is normal. But they will continue sucking. Signs that your baby is getting milk are long, slow sucks as the baby's jaw moves down deeply and you hear them swallow.

Pump your breasts after feedings during the first few weeks of using the nipple shield. Always pump anytime your baby receives a supplement after they have nursed with or without the nipple shield. This will help promote your milk supply.

Keep track of how much your baby feeds, their dirty and wet diapers, and their weight.

Talk with your lactation consultant when you plan to wean off the nipple shield (stop using the nipple shield).

Tips when using the nipple shield

- You may apply water, lanolin or breastmilk to the nipple shield to help it stay on your nipple.
- You can rinse the nipple shield in warm water to make it more flexible.
- You can hand express into the nipple shield so your baby gets an instant reward.

Cleaning the nipple shield

- Sterilize your nipple shield before its first use by placing it in boiling water for 20 minutes.
- Wash the nipple shield with hot water and soap after each use. Allow it to air dry. You can also put it on the top rack of the dishwasher on a hot cycle.
- Sterilize the nipple shield once a day by placing it in boiling water for 20 minutes.

Weaning from the nipple shield

The nipple shield is meant to be a device for short-term use. The more premature the baby, the longer you may need to use it. The goal is to return to breastfeeding, without the need for special equipment. If the baby seems unable to nurse without the nipple shield, follow up with a lactation consultant.

Here are some tips to help you slowly stop using the nipple shield to breastfeed:

- As your baby's breastfeeding ability improves, remove the nipple shield at different times during the feeding.
- Try a different feeding position from what you normally use and offer your 2nd breast without the nipple shield.
- Give your baby the bare breast when they are half asleep or very hungry.
- Remove the nipple shield after 5 to 10 minutes of feeding and re-latch your baby to your bare breast.
- Keep practicing! It will take everyone time to learn how to use a nipple shield correctly.
- Quiet time, more skin-to-skin contact and lots of practice helps with weaning or stopping the use of the shield.
- **Important:** Do not cut off the tip of the nipple shield. The edges can irritate the baby's mouth.

If you have any questions, please ask your physician or lactation consultant.