



Mercy Health  
Care first

## ***Your important health information***

# **Nipple shields**

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For some mothers who are finding it hard to breastfeed their babies, a nipple shield may be useful.

## **What is a nipple shield?**

A thin silicone cover placed over the nipple to help with breastfeeding.

## **When can a nipple shield be used?**

- You have flat or inverted nipples
- If your baby cannot attach or is having difficulty staying attached to the breast.
- To help a premature baby learn to breastfeed.
- Once milk is in and flowing well

*Under the guidance of a Lactation Consultant, shields may be considered if nipples are damaged or breasts engorged*



## **How to use a nipple shield**

- Wash your hands before feeding your baby.
- Expressing some milk into the nipple shield and smearing a little milk around the edges will help the shield to stay in place
- Turn the tip of the shield almost inside out. Place over the middle of the nipple. You can place the 'cut-out' where the nose and/or chin will sit
- As you place the shield over the nipple, hold the edges of the shield, stretching it outwards. This will help your nipple be pulled into the shield. The shield should not move around. You can hold the edges in place with your finger.
- Bring baby in close with baby's chest and tummy touching you, head tilted back and baby's lips touching the nipple shield.
- Wait for baby to have a wide open mouth, then bring your baby quickly into your breast. Do not push your baby's head into the breast.
- Baby's chin should be close into the breast and their mouth very wide open around the nipple shield. Your baby should not slip back off the nipple shield – this can cause pain and nipple damage.

- Your baby's sucking will become slower and regular once your milk is flowing and there will be swallowing. At the end of the feed, milk should be seen in the nipple shield and your breast will feel softer.
- Offer both breasts at each feed.

## **Care of a nipple shield**

After each use:

1. Rinse the nipple shield in cold water.
2. Wash in hot, soapy water.
3. Rinse well under hot running water.
4. Air dry and store in a clean, covered container.

## **How long can I use a nipple shield?**

- You may only need to use a nipple shield for a short time. As your baby grows, he/she will be able to attach more easily to your breast.
- You can keep using the nipple shield for longer if your baby cannot breastfeed without it.

## **Breastfeeding without the nipple shield**

- Choose a time when you and your baby are feeling calm.
- Start breastfeeding with the nipple shield and when your baby is sucking well and your nipple is pulled out, gently take off the nipple shield and try to attach baby to your breast.
- If baby becomes upset or cannot attach, put the nipple shield back on to finish the feed.
- You can start by trying this once a day. It can take time for babies to stop feeding with a nipple shield.

## Points to be aware of

- Nipple shields come in different sizes. It is important to have the correct sized nipple shield.
- Ask for help from a lactation consultant, midwife or breastfeeding counsellor if you are having trouble using a nipple shield.
- Breastfeeds may take longer.
- At first, you may need to express your breasts after feeding. This will help keep your milk flowing and may prevent other problems.
- Baby needs to be well attached to the breast when using a nipple shield to keep a good milk supply.
- Express after breastfeeds, and/or breastfeed more often to ensure adequate drainage of the breast.
- Your Maternal and Child Health Nurse will monitor your baby's weight.

## Resource

Australian Breastfeeding Association. Video by Dr Lisa Amir  
Breastfeeding and nipple shields. <https://vimeo.com/442905546>

### Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

#### **Mercy Hospital for Women**

Breastfeeding Support Service  
Phone: 03 8458 4677

#### **Werribee Mercy Hospital**

Breastfeeding Support Service  
Phone: 03 8754 3407

#### **Other services:**

Australian Breastfeeding Association  
Helpline 1 800 686 268

[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

Maternal & Child Health Line Phone: 13 22 29

Private Lactation Consultant  
[www.lcanz.org](http://www.lcanz.org)

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This document provides general information only and is not intended to replace advice about your health from a qualified practitioner. If you are concerned about your health, you should seek advice from a qualified practitioner.