

BREASTFEEDING ANSWERS

Nipple Shields

A nipple shield is a soft silicone nipple that is worn over your nipple during a feeding. It has holes in the tip, which allows milk to flow to your baby while baby nurses.

Advantages to using a nipple shield

- If there are challenges with nursing, a nipple shield is one tool that can help support your feeding goals.

Disadvantages to using a nipple shield

- Your baby may get less milk if the shield is not used correctly.
- You may need to hand express or pump after breastfeeding to stimulate your milk supply.
- Some babies will start to prefer the nipple shield.

Applying the nipple shield

- Use gentle massage and hand expression to get your milk flowing. Option: wet the brim of nipple shield with your milk-this will help the shield “stick” to your skin. Clean water can also be used.
- Centre the shield over your nipple with the tip turned inside out. Place on nipple. Turn the shield right side out and smooth it into place. Your nipple should be drawn into the tip.
- Some nipple shields have a cut-out or ‘open’ area-this area can be place to align with the position of your baby’s nose.



Latching baby using a nipple shield

- It is important that baby opens their mouth wide, and latches deeply (jaw and lips will be around your areola/the brim of the nipple shield).
- This will help baby to feed effectively. If you can see any part of the nipple shield tip, or if baby is closing their jaws on the nipple shield tip, or if baby has slid down the shield, re-latch baby for a deeper latch.
- Listen for regular swallowing of milk while your baby feeds.

Things to remember

- The right size is important. The nipple shield must be wide enough to fit your nipple comfortably. The size is in millimeters (mm), and is displayed on the package and on the rim of the nipple shield.
- Monitor your baby's wet diapers and stools to make sure that your baby is getting enough milk.
- While using a nipple shield, regular assessment and follow-up by your Health Care Provider and/or Breastfeeding Clinic is recommended.

Weaning from the nipple shield

- Some parents use the nipple shield for one day, and others use it for weeks or months.
- You can try to remove the shield after your milk lets down and you hear your baby swallowing.
- If your baby takes your breast without the shield, try this again at other feeds until your baby takes your breast without the shield.
- If your baby will not take the bare breast, try again in a few days when you and your baby feel relaxed.
- You can continue to use the nipple shield if it is helping your baby to breastfeed.



Cleaning the nipple shield

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

For more information call:

Family Health Information Line at 705-474-1400 ext. 5351 or healthy.families@healthunit.ca.
Our nurses are available from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Reference:

Breastfeeding Answers: A Guide for Helping Families, Second Edition by Nancy Mohrbacher; IBC (2021)

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