

San Maternity Nipple Shields

Breastfeeding Information – Handout 10

Updated September 2023

A nipple shield is a flexible silicone cover that can be placed over the nipple to assist with breastfeeding.

When are they used?

A nipple shield may be suggested to help to help your baby latch if:

- Your baby is premature or small.
- Your nipples are flat or inverted and your baby can not attach.
- Your nipples are too damaged to attach baby comfortably.
- To help transition a baby from a bottle back to the breast.

Important information

- It is important to wait until there is sufficient milk supply to use a nipple shield.
- A large size shield is preferable for most women (regardless of nipple size), to ensure effective milk transfer.
- Research suggests milk may take a little longer to flow from the breast when a nipple shield is used so feeding may take a little longer as well. This is not relevant if a baby is not able to feed well without a shield in the first place.
- While you are feeding with a nipple shield, it is recommended to have your baby weighed weekly or at least fortnightly to ensure adequate growth.

How to Use a Nipple Shield:

- First, express a few drops of milk onto the shield to encourage baby to attach
- Next, stretch the shield centrally over the nipple. If the nipple shield has a cut out section, place this section of the shield where the baby's nose will be.
- Position yourself comfortably with the baby facing you, chest to chest.
- Keep your fingers well back to the outside rim of the shield to give the baby plenty of room to latch on, ensuring the tongue is down under the shield.
- Touch your baby's upper lip with the shield.
- The baby's mouth should be open very wide with the lips flanged outwards. The chin should be touching or pressing into the breast, with no space between the chin and the breast. The cheeks should be well rounded with no dimpling and the nose free of the breast.
- After initial attachment, the breastfeeding should be pain free. A strong drawing feeling may be experienced as the nipple is drawn into the shield.

How do I know if my baby is latched on correctly?

- You can see your baby's mouth on the breast (edges of the nipple shield) not on the dome of the nipple shield.
- You can see your baby suck in a rhythm with their jaw and ears moving.

A teaching hospital of



Partner in nursing education



Proudly supported by



San Maternity Nipple Shields

Breastfeeding Information – Handout 10

Updated September 2023

- You can hear your baby swallowing.
- You feel deep breast suction with little or no pain in your nipple.
- The breasts softens during the feed.
- There is milk in the shield when baby detaches.



Correct attachment



Poor attachment

Weaning From the Shield:

- Over time, your nipples will become more manageable for the baby to attach to. The amount of time that this takes is variable.
- Allow the baby to breastfeed for approximately 5 minutes until the nipple has been drawn out. Remove the nipple shield and attempt direct attachment to the breast.
- If you are not successful within a short period of time, replace the shield and try again at a later feed or another day.
- If you are unable to wean the baby from the shield, please contact the lactation office for assistance.
- Occasionally, the nipple shield will need to be used long-term. This is of no consequence if you and your baby are happy, the baby is gaining weight and your milk supply is adequate. If supply starts to diminish, expressing for 5-10 minutes after the breastfeed during the day will usually be sufficient to stimulate more milk production.

Care of the Nipple Shield at Home:

- First, rinse in cold water.
- Then, wash in hot, soapy water, removing all milky residue.
- Rinse well with clean water.
- Air dry, or pat dry with a clean paper towel.
- Store in a clean, dry container with a lid. The storage container should be washed and dried daily.
- It is not necessary to sterilize a nipple shield.

For more information:

Australian Breastfeeding Association

p: 1800 686 268

w: www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/nipple-shields

Reviewed September 2023 by Leah Roberts, IBCLC RM.

A teaching hospital of



Partner in nursing education



Proudly supported by

