

Fact Sheet

Using Nipple Shields

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What are they?

Nipple shields are a silicone dome that fit over your nipple giving your nipple more shape and a protective barrier. This can make it easier for the baby to latch and for some women will reduce nipple pain.

When can you use them?

- to improve or assist latching when you have a flat or inverted nipple once your supply is increasing (usually after 36 – 48 hours)
- to improve milk transfer in a premature baby until your baby grows
- to assist your baby if they have nipple confusion or preferring an artificial teat
- to provide a barrier if you have damaged nipples and skin conditions such as eczema. The nipple shield may make your eczema worse.

Which one is better?

- it is generally recommended that a wide based (24-28mm), silicon nipple shield is used. Nipple shields that are cut away on one side tend to be most stable and less likely to curl up when your infant feeds
- for a premature baby, a 20mm shield may be easier to use

How do I use them?

- do not express first as the nipple shield may slide off the nipple/areola
- roll back the shield to about one-third of the length of the nipple dome



- The dome is applied to the nipple, rolling the shield onto the areola. This action places the nipple deeper into the shield supporting effective latching



Are there any problems?

- a nipple shield can mask any sucking problems your baby may have. Especially when your milk supply is high (about day 3-4). Your baby will look like he / she is sucking well. However once your supply relies on effective emptying of the breast, your milk supply may drop and cause weight gain problems in your baby
- when used with damaged nipples it may cause more damage and bleeding. This won't harm the baby

How do I know the baby is latched to the breast effectively?



You will see:

- your baby's jaw is close to the breast, not on the dome of the nipple shield (Picture 1)
- your baby sucks rhythmically with full jaw movement (ears wiggle)
- you can hear your baby swallowing
- you feel deep breast suction with minimal / no pain in the nipple

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How long can I use them?

- timing of the weaning from the nipple shield has to be appropriate for you and your baby
- early weaning from the nipple shield i.e. within 2-3 days is preferred
- some women may choose to use the nipple shield long term. As long as the baby is well and gaining weight, this is fine

How to breastfeed without the nipple shield

- use skin to skin contact to comfort your baby
- when your baby is calm and showing early signs of hunger
- at the beginning of the feed or once your baby's initial hunger has settled
- try feeding without the shield, if the baby becomes distressed; go back to feeding using the nipple shield

Care of the nipple shield

- it is necessary to keep the nipple shield/s clean
- wash in hot soapy water and rinse clean after every use
- dry thoroughly with a clean cloth and store in a clean container / plastic bag

We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.

Send your feedback to:

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