



Nipple shields

Patient information

A nipple shield is a thin, flexible silicone aid placed over the nipple that may help to improve attachment if the baby is still unable to attach to the breast following breastfeeding support from a midwife or lactation consultant.

Once your milk supply has increased in amount and is flowing well (usually from day three to five after your baby is born), you may find a nipple shield helpful to improve your baby's latch and breastmilk transfer.

Additional breastfeeding support is encouraged if you need to use a nipple shield to make sure that the shield is the correct size for you, your baby is attached well and drinking enough breastmilk.

A nipple shield that is not correct for you and your baby may interrupt good milk flow and cause pain and nipple damage.

Reasons to use a nipple shield

There are a variety of reasons for using a nipple shield including:

- Trouble attaching to the breast and maintaining attachment
- Small or premature baby
- Mother's nipples are flat or inverted
- Baby is having difficulty with the fast flow of your milk
- To help the baby transition from long-term bottle use to breastfeeding
- Oral anatomical variations in the baby (eg: high palate).

Applying the nipple shield

Scan the QR code below to watch a video of nipple shield application and use.

Breastfeeding with a Nipple Shield ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com))

- You may need to hold the shield in place with your fingers on the outer edge when bringing your baby to the breast.
- Touch the tip of the nipple shield underneath your baby's nose and when your baby's mouth is wide open, bring baby onto the shield/breast.
- Hold your baby firmly against your body to make sure your baby does not slip off the shield and cause pain and poor milk transfer.
- It is important to look and listen for swallowing to make sure your baby is getting your milk.

If the breast is not soft and comfortable after the breastfeed, you will need to express and give your baby the expressed milk.

To reduce the risk of developing engorgement and mastitis you may need to continue expressing until your baby is transferring adequate volumes at the breast. Your midwife or lactation consultant can advise on how and when to express.

Close follow-up is important to check your breastmilk supply, milk transfer when feeding and your baby's output and growth.



Cleaning the nipple shield

After each feed, rinse the shield in cold water, then wash in hot soapy water, rinse well and dry. Store in a clean container.

There is no need to sterilise the nipple shield.

Weaning from the nipple shield

Depending on the reason the shield was introduced, your baby may need to use the nipple shield until they can effectively attach at the breast. The time frame varies with each baby. Do not rush this process.

- Commence the breastfeed with the shield - this is what your baby is used to.
- Towards the end of the feed, when the nipple is drawn out, remove the shield and attempt direct attachment to the breast.
- Some extra shaping of the nipple/areola may be required.
- If your baby is having problems maintaining the latch, and is not transferring good volumes of breastmilk, continue using the nipple shield.

On occasions your baby may need to continue using it throughout the breastfeeding journey. If your supply is maintained and your baby is growing well, that is fine.

If you continue to have problems attaching your baby to the breast, have pain or concerns, contact the Breastfeeding Centre of WA, based at King Edward Memorial Hospital, on (08) 6458 1844 or visit the [website](#).

We offer individual centred lactation support. Open Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm.

Scan the QR code for resources on breastfeeding.



More information

For more Information about breastfeeding, contact the Australian Breastfeeding Association Breastfeeding Helpline on 1800 686 268 or visit their website www.breastfeeding.asn.au



The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.



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