



Using a Nipple Shield

What is a nipple shield?

A nipple shield is a nipple-shaped covering worn over the nipple during breastfeeding to help a baby feed.



Nipple shields can be purchased at the BC Women's Gift Shop or at most major drug stores.

When to use a nipple shield

First, try:

- spending time with your diapered baby nuzzled up against your bare skin ("skin-to-skin care")
- cuddling your baby and giving your baby lots of chances to latch and breastfeed.

If your baby is still having trouble latching or feeding well, ask your nurse or lactation consultant about using a nipple shield. A shield may be useful for:

- mothers who have flat or inverted nipples
- premature or sick babies who are having trouble latching, staying latched during the feed, or having trouble feeding well.

Getting the right fit

Nipple shields come in three sizes: small (16mm), medium (20mm), and large (24mm). Consider the following when deciding which nipple shield to use:

- the size of your baby (e.g. the 16 and 20mm shields are often used with smaller babies)
- the size of your nipples (e.g. larger nipples will not fit into the small nipple shield).

Choose the shield that works for you and your baby.

How to use a nipple shield

Here are some tips for using a nipple shield:

- learn how to see if your baby is ready to start feeding (your baby's "feeding cues")
- place the shield in hot water for 2 to 3 minutes before using. This may help make the nipple shield more flexible and easier to stick to your breast
- if there is a cut-out section of the shield, place this section over the area of your breast where your baby's nose will be
- when centering the shield onto your nipple, press the base of the nipple part of the shield against your breast. This may help draw your nipple into the shield
- express a few drops of milk into the nipple part of the shield or onto the shield. The smell of the breast milk may encourage your baby to latch to the nipple
- stroke your baby's mouth with the tip of the shield to encourage your baby to open his or her mouth
- ring your baby in as close as possible to help him or her to latch as far onto your breast as possible – not just on to the tip of the shield.



Learn more about your baby's feeding cues by watching a video at:

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-about-baby-feeding-cues-and-behaviours>

How to know your baby is getting milk

If you are using a nipple shield, you can tell if your baby is getting milk if you:

- See **milk in the nipple shield**
- Hear **sucking and swallowing**
- Your baby is **content after a feed**
- Your baby should be **gaining weight**. Your baby may be weighed before and after each feeding to measure how much milk he or she is getting
- Your baby will have the expected **number of wet diapers and bowel movements** each day

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For more Signs of a Good Feed, you can read: <http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/signs-good-feed>

If you are using a nipple shield over a longer period of time, you may find that your milk supply will decrease. It's a good idea to:

- hand express or pump after each feed to maintain your milk supply as long as a shield is used
- check your baby's weight at least every 1 to 2 weeks to make sure he or she is getting enough milk.

If you and your baby are in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)...

...and you are concerned with how much milk your baby is getting, the nurse can help assess your baby's need for milk top-ups through tube feeds.

This is based on:

- your perception of how empty your breasts are after feeding
- your baby's fullness cues (e.g. falling asleep after a feed, becoming increasingly drowsy, stopping sucking and pushing away from your breast)
- the length of time your baby is sucking at your breast.



Learn more about other feeding methods by watching the video at:

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/video-alternative-feeding-methods-newborns>

How to clean the nipple shield

1. Rinse the remaining milk from the shield with water.
2. Wash the shield with hot, soapy water. Rinse well.
3. Let the shield air dry.
4. Store the shield in a clean container or a zip lock bag.

Weaning your baby off of the nipple shield

Once your baby is feeding well with the shield, it is a good idea to work towards getting him or her directly onto your breast. Some strategies that may help include:

- put your baby skin-to-skin often
- roll your nipples with your fingers or pump briefly to bring your nipples out (erect) before offering your baby your breast
- express milk onto your nipples to entice your baby onto your breast before using the shield
- try feeding your baby without the nipple shield while he or she is drowsy or just waking up
- start your baby on the shield for a few minutes and then slip the shield off and try without it
- keep trying. Gradually, with time, most babies can directly breastfeed.

If you have questions and would like help with feeding your baby...

- and you are still in the hospital, ask your nurse or contact the lactation consultant
- after you are home from the hospital, see your doctor, nurse, or midwife in your community.