

## What is a nipple shield?

A nipple shield is a soft, thin, flexible silicone or plastic covering worn over your nipple that may help your baby breast/chest feed.

## Before using a nipple shield

Spend time holding your baby skin-to-skin and cuddle them giving them lots of chances to latch and feed.

## When should I use a nipple shield?

If your baby is still having trouble latching or feeding well, ask your healthcare provider about using a nipple shield. A shield may be useful if:

- You have flat or inverted nipples
- Your baby is premature or sick
- Your baby has trouble latching or staying latched during feedings
- Your baby has trouble feeding

## Getting the right fit

Choose the shield that works for you and your baby. Nipple shields come in three sizes:

- Small (16mm)
- Medium (20mm)
- Large (24mm)

Consider the following when deciding which nipple shield to use:

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

## Tips for using a nipple shield

- Learn how to tell if your baby is ready to start feeding (scan the QR code below).
- Place the shield in hot water for 2 to 3 minutes before using to soften it. This may help make the nipple shield more flexible and to stick to your breast.
- If there is a cut-out section of the shield, place it where your baby's nose will be when latched.
- When centering the shield onto your nipple, press the base of the nipple part of the shield inwards. 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 your milk may encourage your baby to latch onto the nipple.
- Stroke your baby's mouth with the tip of the shield to encourage them to open their mouth.
- Bring your baby in as close as possible to help them to latch on as far as possible – not just on to the tip of the shield.

## How to know if your baby is getting milk

- You see milk in the nipple shield
- You feel the baby sucking and hear swallowing
- Your baby is content after feeding



Nipple Shield



Baby feeding using a nipple shield

- Your breast feels softer and lighter after feeding
- Your baby is gaining weight
- Your baby has the expected number of wet diapers and bowel movements each day.

Note: Your milk supply may decrease if you are using a nipple shield over a longer period

**Try to:**

- Hand express or pump after each feeding to maintain your milk supply when a shield is used.
- Check your baby’s weight every 1 to 2 weeks to make sure they are getting enough milk.

**How to clean a nipple shield**

It is important to clean the nipple shield after each use. Follow these steps to clean your nipple shield.

1. Rinse in cool water to remove milk
2. Then wash in hot, soapy water and rinse well
3. Let the shield air dry
4. Store the shield in a clean container or zip lock bag. Do NOT store while wet or damp

**Weaning your baby off the nipple shield**

Once your baby is feeding well with the shield, it is a good idea to work towards getting them to feed directly from your breast. It may help if you:

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin often
- Roll your nipples with your fingers or pump briefly to bring your nipples out (erect) before latching your baby.
- Express milk onto your nipples to entice your baby to feed directly before using the shield
- Try feeding your baby without the nipple shield while they are 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 feed without using a nipple shield

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

NICU nurses can assess your baby’s need for milk top-ups through a feeding tube based on:

- Your perception of how empty your breast is after feeding
- Your baby’s fullness cues (such as falling asleep after a feeding, becoming increasingly drowsy, stopping sucking, and pushing away from you)
- The length of time your baby is sucking at your breast/chest

Note: Nipple shields should be disinfected once a day while your baby is still in the NICU. Disinfect the nipple shield by placing it in boiling water for 5 minutes, putting it in the dishwasher, or putting it in a microwave steam sterilizer bag.

**Do you have questions or need help with feeding your baby?**

**In hospital:** ask your healthcare provider or contact the lactation consultant team.

**At home:** contact your healthcare provider or public health unit with questions about feeding your baby.

Scan the following QR Codes for more information and resources:

		
Feeding Cues	Signs of a good feeding	Alternative feeding methods