

Feeding Your Baby



Using a Nipple Shield



When to consider a nipple shield

Nipple shields work best when you have lots of milk and it flows easily. This is usually 2 to 5 days after birth.

It is best to not use a nipple shield for the first 2 days after birth. This is a time when breast milk is thicker. This milk is called colostrum (say *kol-os-trum*). This valuable early milk will stick to the inside of the shield and not reach baby.

You might want to consider using a nipple shield if:

- Baby has trouble latching and nothing else has helped (for example when you have inverted nipples).
- You continue to have painful nipples even with a good latch by baby (when nipples have become sore or damaged early on and need time to heal).
- Baby has trouble coping with a very fast milk flow.
- Baby is premature, has a weak suck, or has other sucking challenges.
- Baby has a feeding tube and you are also breastfeeding/chestfeeding (helps keep the feeding tube in place).
- You want to switch baby from bottle back to breast/chest.

A nipple shield can give your baby a firmer surface to latch onto, to focus on, and to help with sucking.

Choosing and using a nipple shield

- Use the **smallest size shield that doesn't pinch your nipple**. Your nurse or feeding specialist can help you
- Wash your hands before starting.
- Run the shield under hot water to make it more flexible and help it stick to your breast/chest.
- To help it stick to your breast/chest, try a little of your milk or lanolin ointment under the rim of the shield.
- Fold the rim of the shield back and place the center of the shield over your nipple.
- Spread the rim back over your breast/chest to form a seal.



← Rim folded back to place on nipple

Rim spread over breast/chest to form a seal →



- Try hand expressing to get milk flow started. Milk in the shield might help your baby to latch and suck.
- Hold the shield in place by putting your thumb and one fingertip on the edges of the shield as far away from the nipple as possible.



Holding shield in place with thumb and finger

Feeding with a nipple shield

- Hold baby with your palm or wrist between baby's shoulder blades and your fingers supporting baby's neck.
- Tickle baby's lip with your nipple.
- Wait for baby's mouth to open wide - like a yawn – then bring baby's shoulders quickly towards you and the nipple.
- If at first you don't succeed...try again!
- Relax your hand-holding baby once baby has latched on.
- Make sure the rim of the shield doesn't cover baby's nose.



Tickle baby's lip with nipple.
Wait for mouth to open wide.

Knowing when baby is latched on correctly

Baby is latched on to the nipple shield correctly if:

- You do not see the nipple part of the shield at all.
- Baby's chin buried in breast/chest and lips are hidden by cheeks and breast/chest tissue.
- The shield lies flat on your breast/chest, with no wrinkles.
- There is no pain when baby is sucking.
- You can hear baby swallowing (soft "ka" sounds).
- You see milk in the shield tip when baby is done.
- Baby seems full and content after the feed.



Not deep enough



Much better latch!

Weaning off the nipple shield

The shield is usually meant to use for a short time. Babies are continually developing and usually 'grow out of' needing the shield.

You can start to wean off the shield once baby feeds easily with the shield each time.

To begin weaning:

- Let your baby start the feed with the shield as usual.
- Wait a couple minutes until baby is swallowing and relaxed.
- Keeping baby in same position quickly remove the shield and re-latch the baby.

If this doesn't work at first, re-latch baby with the shield. You want to keep your baby happy at the breast/chest.

Try again later in this feed, at another feed, or when baby is sleepy or relaxed.

Some babies won't feed without the shield. This is not a problem as long as baby is gaining well. The goal is to use the shield as long as the baby needs it.

Cleaning the nipple shield

After each use:

- Rinse with cold water.
- Wash with hot soapy water.
- Rinse with hot water.
- Allow to dry.

One or more times a day, boil the shield for 2 minutes or use a microwave steam bag when:

- Baby is sick.
- Baby is a preemie.

Health checks are important

- Keep all appointments with your doctor, midwife, or public health nurse so baby's weight and growth can be checked regularly.
- Weigh baby at least 1 time each week for the first month to make sure baby is gaining weight. A good weight gain is about 20 to 30 gm (1 ounce) a day. If you don't have a weigh scale, you can weigh baby at the public health unit office.



Microsoft Photos

For more information

Contact your local Public Health unit.

Abbotsford	604-864-3400	Mission	604-814-5500
Agassiz	604-793-7160	New Westminster	604-777-6740
Burnaby	604-918-7605	Surrey – Cloverdale	604-575-5100
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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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