

Using a Nipple Shield

Why Use a Nipple Shield?

We have found that using a nipple shield is an effective way to get a baby who is having difficulty latching, onto the breast to breastfeed. Usually, using a shield eliminates the need for pumping and supplementing the baby. This is a real time and energy saver for mothers. A nipple shield can occasionally be used to reduce the discomfort of nursing with cracked nipples.

How do I use a nipple shield?

To help the shield stay in place, place the nipple in the middle of the shield, hold the shield lightly with thumb and index finger at the top and bottom of the shield and keep your fingers well out of baby's way. You will notice that the nipple does not fill the shield. This is normal.

Offer the breast with the shield the same way as you would offer the breast without the shield. That is, stroke the baby's upper lip and wait for him to open wide before bringing him onto the breast. Resist the temptation to push the firmer silicone nipple into his mouth. When baby is properly latched onto the breast with the shield, the whole shield nipple should be in his mouth and the lips should be on the rim on the shield. When baby comes off the breast, there should be a little milk in the tip of the shield. Many babies adjust to nursing on a nipple shield fairly quickly; others need more practice.

How do I wash the shield?

Washing the nipple shield is a simple matter of washing it with warm soapy water, rinsing it well and drying it with a* clean towel.

How do I wean my baby from the shield?

Once baby is nursing consistently and well with the shield, offer the breast without the shield at each feed. You can do this at the beginning, middle or end of a feed and when ever you find the baby is calm and ready to try a little nursing. Never push baby to the point of frustration. If he doesn't want to nurse without the shield, put it back on and try again another time. Some babies learn to nurse without the shield quite quickly; others take a number of weeks.



Please do not cut away the tip of the shield as a way of weaning. This results in a sharp edge which may injure you or your baby.

What if my baby cannot nurse without a shield?

Most babies will learn to nurse without a shield. However, in the rare case that a baby needs to use it long-term it is not usually a problem.

What else do I need to know?

It is important to make sure that a baby who is using a nipple shield is getting enough calories and is growing. Please make sure that you and your baby are receiving regular review by us or by your health care provider.

Nipple shields are available in 16, 20, and 24-millimeter sizes and several styles. The size shield used is usually based on the baby's mouth size. We use the largest size the baby can handle. The smaller the shield, the higher the risk of nipple pain and of baby not getting enough milk. Most babies and mothers do best with the 24-milimetre size shield. Please let us know if you have questions about which size shield you and your baby should use. Some shields have a cut out section on one or both sides of the rim. These can be difficult to use and we do not recommend them.