

Maternity Services

Nipple Shields – A User Guide

What is a Nipple Shield?

A nipple shield is a thin, often silicone, teat, that is worn over the mother's nipple during feeding. A silicone nipple shield is usually the best to use, as it is clearer and thinner than others. There are some nipple shields that allow for more skin-to-skin contact than the typical ones which are called contact nipple shields.

Where can I buy a nipple shield?

Nipple shields can be purchased from a range of stores and online. There are differing shapes and sizes (see later for correct sizing). You should only need one nipple shield, although they are often sold in pairs.



When should I use a nipple shield?

Nipple shields are not generally recommended until the 'milk comes in' after birth; around 2-3 days, unless there is an obvious problem, such as [prematurity](#) or [difficulty latching](#) due to some physical characteristic of the baby and/or mother.

Please ask for advice from your midwife if you are unsure.

The reasons for this are:

- milk transfer to baby is reduced i.e. baby may get less milk
- the breast may not receive the same kind of stimulation that it does when a baby sucks directly on the breast, and this will lead to a reduced milk supply
- nipple shields may interfere with proper attachment causing.....
- the potential for less effective breast drainage may mean mum is at a higher risk of blocked ducts, engorgement and mastitis
- It can be difficult to wean from the shield if baby is only used to feeding via the shield
- mum may lose confidence in how she is feeding confidence may be lost in feeding directly from the breast

When are nipple shields recommended?

Nipple shields should be used only after other interventions have been tried, see below

- positioning and attachment have been checked by a midwife or maternity care support worker
- exaggerated latch or gentle shaping of the breast tissue to encourage a deeper attachment have been considered
- a 'laid back' position has been tried (see below)
- a hospital-grade electric pump has been used to draw out flat or inverted nipples
- breastmilk has been expressed 8-10 times in 24 hours to maintain milk supply
- cup feeding or syringe feeding has been considered
- skin-to-skin time has been prioritised and increased

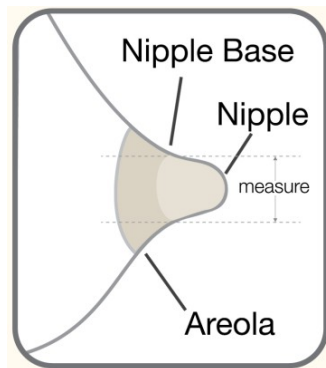
Many breastfeeding challenges can be overcome with skilled breastfeeding support please talk to your midwife for details of local community support.



How to Use a Nipple Shield

How do I measure the correct size?

It is essential to use the correct size nipple shield to encourage a deeper attachment and improved milk transfer. To ensure you purchase the correct size shield you must measure the *nipple diameter* (see picture) and choose the right size according to the manufacturer, generally these will be small, medium and large.



The shield teat should fit comfortably over the mother's nipple with a small amount of space between the base and side of the nipple and the teat. As a general guide a full-term baby will need a medium or large size shield, and the nipple should fill the majority of the teat.

How do I place the nipple shield?



hold the nipple shield edges between finger and thumb in each hand stretching the base of the teat slightly, then place the teat over the nipple and the sides on to the breast before releasing the tension.



this will create a slight vacuum that can help to draw the nipple up in to the teat as the fingers are released which helps to get better adherence on to the mother's nipple and breast. This helps the baby to have a deeper attachment

Making sure baby is well attached on to the breast while using a shield

good deep attachment

poor shallow attachment



How do I clean and store my shield?

Nipple shields need to be cleaned and stored before use. To first use, clean with hot soapy water, rinse, dry thoroughly and store in a clean and dry container.



How long do I use a nipple shield for?

Nipple shields are designed to be used for as short a period as possible as you and baby develop your expertise in breastfeeding, they may no longer be necessary. If your baby is gaining weight appropriately then there is no rush to wean from the shield. Continue to access breast-feeding support services as needed.

How do I wean from nipple shields?

You may be able to begin to latch baby without a shield from the start of a feed or you may remove the shield part way through a feed and continue without. You may only use a shield on one breast, or for the first few minutes. Some babies need only one or two sessions with the nipple shields, while others may need more. Don't cut down a shield to wean a baby off it — this practice is no longer recommended. Keep trying as often as you can and give it some time. Your baby might be more receptive to feeding without the shield when they are less hungry or sleepy. Seek support if needed.

Who do I contact for further support?

Your community midwife will be able to support you and direct you towards community-based support and the Infant Feeding Team. As your baby grows your Health Visiting Team will be able to provide further support.

We aim to provide the best care for every patient. So, we would like your feedback on the quality of the care you have received from the Hospital. Please visit:

<http://ratenhs.uk/IQu9vx> Or scan QR code:

