

Maternity Services at Calvary

Special Care Nursery Fact Sheet

What are Nipple Shields?

Nipple shields are thin flexible silicone covers which can be placed over the mother's nipple and areola, to assist with breast feeding.

Indications for using a Nipple Shield

- Your nipples are flat or inverted and baby has difficulty in attaching to the breast
- Your baby is unable to open his/her mouth wide enough to achieve correct attachment
- Your baby is unable to draw the nipple and areola into his/her mouth
- Your baby falls asleep at the breast once attached and is unable to maintain regular nutritive sucking
- Your baby is born prematurely
- You may have an over active let down reflex.

When not to use a Nipple Shield

- Not until your milk is in and flowing well
- Not if your nipples are damaged from poor attachment to the breast
- Not if your breasts are engorged and baby cannot grasp the swollen breast tissue.

When using the Nipple Shield

- An adequate milk supply is necessary
- Correct attachment is important
- The baby's jaw should be closed on the breast and not on the shaft of the nipple shield
- Sucking only on the nipple can constrict milk flow, and may reduce stimulation of the milk supply, which may affect your baby's growth
- It is recommended, to have your baby weighed weekly or fortnightly to ensure adequate growth.

Mothers may wish to use a nipple shield for an indefinite period of time; however, the use of a nipple shield should be regarded as a temporary measure and will not fix all breast feeding problems.

How to use the Nipple Shield

- Express a few drops of milk to start the milk flowing
- To fit the shield, express a little milk into it and onto the areola, prior to placing it centrally over the nipple, with the flange folded down against the breast. Stretch the shield to allow the nipple to be drawn in
- Correctly position your baby and ensure good attachment, by waiting until the mouth is open wide with the tongue forward and down, before bringing baby to the breast. The baby's lips should be spread and the mouth open wide.
- Once your baby begins to feed, the let down reflex will be stimulated. Sometimes this may take a little time.
- You should be able to see good nutritive suckling and hear your baby swallowing, during the feed.
- It is important to check that your baby doesn't slip back off the shield, as this will cause pinching and nipple damage.
- If you are unsure whether milk transfer is occurring, remove baby from the breast and check the following:

- Has the nipple been drawn into the shield?
- Is there milk in the shield?

Protection of your milk supply is important

The supply of breast milk is controlled by how much milk your baby takes each feed. The more a baby breastfeeds, the more milk is produced. This is called supply and demand. A small, weak or poor suckling baby may under stimulate the breast and this may lead to a drop in milk supply. If this occurs, expressing after feeds will be necessary to increase breastmilk supply. Expressed milk can be used for complimentary feeds for your baby.

Cleaning and care of the Nipple Shield

- Rinse in cold water to remove milk residue
- Wash in warm soapy water and rinse well, then dry the shield
- Store in a clean dry container.

How to wean your baby off the Nipple Shield

- The goal is to return to fully breast feeding your baby without the use of a nipple shield.
- As your baby's breastfeeding ability improves, remove the nipple shield part way through the feed when the nipple is drawn out, and re attach your baby to the breast.
- If your baby is unable to feed without the shield, this could mean that the problem has not yet resolved. Try again at a later stage.
- As long as your baby is gaining weight and growing well, continued use of the nipple shield is not a problem.
- Sometimes long term use of the nipple shield can be habit forming. This may make it more difficult for your baby to be weaned off the nipple shield. You will need to be patient.
- It is important that you seek assistance from your Midwife, Lactation Consultant, or Maternal Child Health Nurse.

For further information

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Tel: 1800mum 2 mum(1800 686 268)

Web: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Maternal & Child Health Line

Tel: 6207 9977

References

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