Using a Nipple Shield for Breastfeeding

About nipple shields
A nipple shield is a flexible, nipple-shaped cover that is worn over the mother’s nipple during breastfeeding. It can help in getting the baby to latch onto the breast when latching on has not been successful. Talk with a qualified lactation consultant before using a nipple shield.

Nipples shields are not used for sore nipples. If you have pain when your baby latches on or nipple soreness that does not go away, talk to a lactation consultant.

Choosing a nipple shield
Most nipple shields are made of a thin, clear silicone. They have small holes at the top where the breast milk comes through. There are shields with a cutout on one side that allows for more skin-to-skin contact with the baby. Shields also come in different sizes.

A lactation consultant can help you pick the right shield for you.

How to use a nipple shield

Putting the Shield in Place
- Moisten the shield with water or colostrum (your first breast milk right after birth) before applying it. This helps it to stick to your skin better. Using breast milk can also help the baby to want to latch on.
- Turn the shield inside out and center it over your nipple and areola.
- Slowly roll the shield over your nipple and areola into place. Your nipple should be inside the shield’s nipple.

Moving to Feeding without a Shield
- Plan 1 to 2 feedings where the baby will latch on for a few minutes to the shield. Then remove the shield and try to have the baby latch onto your breast. If this is not successful, put the shield back on. You may need to wear it for the full feeding during the first 24 hours.
- Next, try removing the shield from your breast after the baby has been on and nursing well for 5 to 7 minutes. If this is working for you, begin attaching the baby to your bare breast for full feeds by 72 hours or sooner, if you can.
- Wean your baby from the shield as soon as possible.
During feeding

• Stroke your baby’s lower lip with the shield and wait for the mouth to open. It may take a few tries before your baby latches on and starts to nurse.
• Check that your baby is not sucking on the tip of the nipple shield. Listen for swallowing during feeding.

After feeding

• Use an electric breast pump after feeding to empty your breasts and to build up enough milk supply while using the shield.
• Wash the nipple shield with hot, soapy water. Rinse and air-dry between uses. Refer to the shield maker’s instructions for care of the shield.

When to call your baby’s doctor

If not used properly, using a nipple shield can reduce the amount of milk your baby gets and can lead to weight loss.

• Have your baby’s weight checked by Ohio State Lactation or your baby’s doctor if you are using the shield for feedings.
• Record the number of wet and dirty diapers your baby has on a breastfeeding record to make sure that he or she is getting enough milk and gaining weight.
  › If your baby does not have 5 to 6 wet diapers or 3 to 4 stools a day, call your baby’s doctor right away.
• If you need to continue to use the nipple shield for more than 2 weeks, call Ohio State Lactation Services at 614-293-8910.

Call Ohio State Lactation Services’ Breastfeeding Helpline at 614-293-8910 for questions or support.