

Breastfeeding supplementer

A breastfeeding supplementer, or supply line, allows a baby to receive extra milk at the breast and hence removes the need for supplementary feeding with a bottle. It consists of a container that can be worn on a cord around the mother's neck and fine tubing which carries expressed breastmilk or formula from the container to the nipple. When the infant sucks at the breast, milk is drawn through this tubing into their mouth, along with any milk from the breast.

A breastfeeding supplementer is most commonly used:

- to breastfeed during relactation or induced lactation
- when an infant is starting to refuse the breast due to a low supply
- for mothers with ongoing low supply issues (eg insufficient glandular tissue, previous breast reduction surgery)
- in some cases of infant sucking difficulties such as a weak, disorganised, or dysfunctional suck.

The advantages of using a supplementer include:

- saves time as top ups don't need to be given after the breastfeed
- can increase active feeding at the breast with improved milk flow, therefore increasing stimulation to the nipple and supporting milk production
- removes the need to use bottle and teat which decreases risk of nipple confusion.

A breastfeeding supplementer may be purchased from some local ABA groups/branch offices, or online from some breastfeeding retailers. Some hospitals and pharmacies sell them too.

Using a breastfeeding supplementer can be a rewarding experience but can take some time to get the hang of and like other new skills confidence comes with practice. Support while using one is therefore very important. This can be from an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor or a lactation consultant.

Resources

Australian Breastfeeding Association 2019, *Breastfeeding: using a breastfeeding supplementer*, Retrieved 18/1/20 from <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/using-breastfeeding-supplementer>

Australian Breastfeeding Association 2019, *Breastfeeding: using a breastfeeding supplementer* booklet

Brodribb, W. (ed) 2019, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia*. 5th ed. Australian Breastfeeding Association, Victoria.



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