



Australian  
Breastfeeding  
Association

For Health  
Professionals

# Nipple shields

A nipple shield is a thin flexible silicone cover which a mother places over her nipple before breastfeeding her infant. They can be helpful in some cases of nipple pain or attachment problems.

## Further reading

Brodribb, W. (Ed.). (2019). Lactation aids. In *Breastfeeding Management in Australia* (5th ed., pp. 399–417). Australian Breastfeeding Association.

ABA Professional Feature Article, [Nipple shield use](#)

## Resources for families

Information for families can be found by searching for '[nipple shields](#)' on the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) website, [breastfeeding.asn.au](http://breastfeeding.asn.au)

Women with breastfeeding concerns that result in the use of a nipple shield often require additional breastfeeding support. ABA breastfeeding counsellors do not provide medical advice. However, a call to the National Breastfeeding Helpline on 1800 686 268 can provide reassurance, support, and practical suggestions to support continued breastfeeding.

## Common reasons for use

Nipple shields are commonly used to assist with:

- an infant attaching to the breast when a mother has flat or inverted nipples
- sore and/or cracked nipples that have not responded to all other strategies
- sucking difficulties that have not responded to other management strategies
- enticing a bottle-fed infant back to the breast
- feeding preterm infants at the breast.

## Using a nipple shield

Nipple shields come in different sizes. It is important for them to be fitted to suit the size of an individual mother's nipples. A poorly fitting nipple shield can impede milk flow and cause nipple damage.

Nipple shields must be put on the breast correctly each time to optimise milk removal and comfort. It is important to observe a breastfeed when a mother begins using a nipple shield to ensure the infant is able to remove milk well and the mother's comfort is maintained. Mothers can be encouraged to attend a [local Australian Breastfeeding Association group meeting](#) or see a [lactation consultant](#) for this purpose.

In most cases, use of a nipple shield is temporary. Many mothers find they only need to use the nipple shield in the early days while their infant is learning to breastfeed. While using a nipple shield, mothers should be encouraged to look for [signs that their baby is getting enough milk](#).

## Weaning off nipple shields

Some infants are reluctant to breastfeed without a nipple shield once the need for their use subsides. For such infants, the following tips may help:

- Remove the nipple shield part way through the breastfeed (e.g., after the milk-ejection reflex starts).
- Encourage skin-to-skin contact between the mother and the infant when breastfeeding.
- Allow the infant to use their instincts to find their mother's breasts (i.e. [baby-led attachment](#)).
- Offer the infant a breastfeed as soon as they wake from a sleep, or when they make early [feeding cues](#). These include turning their head from side to side, sticking their tongue out, wriggling, or bringing their hands to their mouth.