

## What is a nipple shield?

A nipple shield is a flexible silicone nipple that is worn over the mom's nipple during a feeding. Nipple shields should in general be considered a short-term solution and should be used under the guidance of a lactation consultant.

It's important with every breastfeeding session that you attempt to latch the infant directly to the nipple prior to putting on the shield for use. Ideally the baby will eventually latch without a shield every feeding.



Please call or email the lactation consultant at Thompson health with questions or concerns.

Courtney Phillips, RN IBCLC  
(585) 396-6295

Main Maternity Unit  
(585) 396-6255

[Courtney.phillips@thompsonhealth.com](mailto:Courtney.phillips@thompsonhealth.com)

*Web resources: information source, Kellymom.com*

### Birthing Center

350 Parrish Street  
Canandaigua, New York  
[ThompsonHealth.com](http://ThompsonHealth.com)



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## Breastfeeding with a Shield

Nurse & Patient Information



## When to use a nipple shield

- Some mothers have small or inverted nipples which make it difficult for the baby to latch on. Using a shield allows for feeding to progress until the baby's suction is strong enough to draw out the nipple.
- Small, weak or sick babies (Pre-mature infants) often have difficulty latching on to the breast. A nipple shield makes latching easier and prevents the baby from becoming discouraged.
- Babies who had to be bottle-fed since birth can become used to the bottle nipple. Nipple shields feel more like a bottle nipple, and aid with the transition from bottle feeding to breast feeding.
- A mother's nipples can become sore or cracked from breastfeeding. A shield allows the mother to continue breastfeeding until her cracked nipples heal and she improves her latching technique. (this use is for only extreme cases of nipple pain/ soreness)

## Disadvantages of nipple shield

- Baby may get less milk if the shield is used incorrectly
- Mom may be more at risk for plugged ducts and mastitis (if the shield causes reduced milk transfer)
- It can be difficult to wean from the shield
- Shield use can also decrease the amount of milk that a mother makes due to the decreased sensation when having the baby latched on.

## Precautions when using a nipple shield

Here are a couple of things to keep an eye on until baby is weaned from the shield:

- When using a shield you'll need to carefully assess your baby for adequate intake. Count his wet diapers every day and make sure that he's having at least 6 really wet ones each 24 hour period. You also will want to make sure that he stools at least twice daily if he is less than 5-6 weeks of age. After 5-6 weeks, his stools may only come every few days, but should still be loose and profuse if many days have passed. Baby will also need to be weighed frequently – at least every 2 weeks (make sure you use the same scale) – until it is clear that he is gaining well.
- You will also want to listen for frequent swallowing during the feeding and feel for overall good breast softening after the feeding. If your breasts are not well-softened after each feeding, you may need to pump until they are softened to ensure that your supply remains adequate. This will lessen your risk for plugged ducts and help to maintain your supply.



## Protection of the milk supply is important.

Milk supply is controlled by how much milk the baby takes. Milk is made by supply and demand by frequent emptying of the breast. A small, weak or poorly suckling baby may under-stimulate the nipples therefore, the milk supply. When using a nipple shield, *it is important to pump after nursing to make sure the breasts are well emptied.* Pumped milk can be used to supplement the baby. Pumping after feeding is necessary until it is clear that the milk supply is stable and the baby is growing well. We suggest a good quality double electric pump either a Medela or Ameda brand electric pump.

Nipple shields are devices that are used to help babies who are not yet ready to breastfeeding normally. We suggest that mothers using nipple shields seek advice from a lactation consultant or other trained individual, as well as their physicians and Midwives. Babies should have weight checks frequently to ensure baby's health and good growth.

