

Nipple shield

Read the following information carefully before using a nipple shield. In order to immediately eliminate the causes for breastfeeding difficulties, fast and competent consultancy* should be top priority. For improving the situation over the long term it is mostly sufficient to control and improve latching, breastfeeding position, breastfeeding frequency etc. Nipple shields shall only be used when comprehensive and competent consultation has been taken place; as a result the underlying causes are unlikely to remain hidden or become even worse and no additional problems occur.

Why using a nipple shield? What has to be taken into account when using a nipple shield?

Made of thin, soft silicone the shields have a more or less stable shade, that stimulates a sucking reflex in the child's mouth. Thus a child that didn't suck or couldn't draw up the nipple properly until that moment, might spontaneously begin to actively suck. A positive, quite desirable effect. However, the child might not be able to train and learn to suck on it's mothers breast. Besides the shield interrupts skin-to-skin contact. Thus the sensitive nerve endings of the nipples are stimulated insufficiently and feedback mechanism gets disturbed. Let-down reflex might thus be delayed, perhaps milk supply decreases, especially if the child latches in-

correct or the use of nipple shields covers underlying problems.

Sore or hurting nipples are common cause for using nipple shields. As a general rule applies: First of all it is essential to identify and eliminate the causes. There might be no necessity of using this equipment afterwards.

Selection of the right size:

Nipple shields are available in various sizes. On one hand the shield needs to be short and small; if it is too big, the baby cannot adequately draw up the mother's nipple and may only suck the shaft of the

shield. On the other hand it needs to be big enough in order to allow the nipple to extend adequately without hurting or obstructing the nipple. As big as necessary, but as small as possible.

Using the nipple shield

When sitting the shield on the nipple make sure the nipple is sucked into the shield even before the child latches on. For this purpose slightly moisten the nipple shield using warm water; before placement roll back the brim and sit the shield on the nipple while stretching it. Place the opening of the shield on the side



Foto: Karl Grabherr

*IBCLCs are specialists regarding breastfeeding and lactation in every issue.

of the nipple where baby's nose has direct contact to the mother's skin.

Make sure your baby's mouth is opened wide and latches correctly. The baby's jaws must close on the breast, not out on the shaft of the nipple shield, having as much breast tissue as possible in it's mouth.

To notice potential problems in time, weight control should take place; expressing milk might be helpful as well.

After each use the nipple shields need to be washed in soapy water and rinsed afterwards. Boil once daily. With sick or premature infants, the clinic possibly recommends boiling after each use. After drying, keep the shields in a clean box.

Weaning off from the nipple shield.

Use the shield as long as necessary and as short as possible.

Weaning begins with the correct selection of size and a correct latch. When it's hunger is already nearly satisfied, some babies can while being fed directly change from shield to nipple, as the nipple at that point is already extended through sucking. Thus some babies have no difficulties in changing from shield to nipple. For others it might be necessary to notice the first signs of hunger and preferably put them to the breast while being half asleep. And yet others will need this equipment for a longer period of time. From time to time you should try again; it's worth the effort.



IBCLC

International Board Certified Lactation Consultants are the only internationally approved breastfeeding and lactation specialists having a medical background.

The decision to breastfeed or not to breastfeed has short- and long-term impact on the health of child and mother. However, breastfeeding sometimes turns out to be difficult and perhaps professional, competent assistance is needed.



Foto: Andrea Hemmelmayr



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Particularly if you are breastfeeding with a nipple shield, the correct latch-on is crucial for being successful.

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Contact your IBCLC