

Nipple shields

GOSFORD PRIVATE MATERNITY SERVICES



Gosford Private
Maternity Services

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Nipple shields

information for mothers

Breast milk is the perfect milk for human babies.

Mothers may experience difficulties in establishing and maintaining breastfeeding. If your health professional suggests the use of a nipple shield it is important to learn the correct technique.

Some mothers and babies will need a few attempts and a little time to learn the technique of using a nipple shield. It is important for women to be patient with themselves.

A nipple shield is a silicone cover placed over the nipple during breastfeeding. It looks like a 'Mexican hat' with holes in the end.

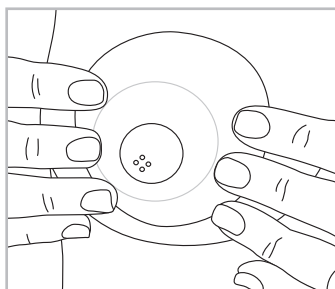
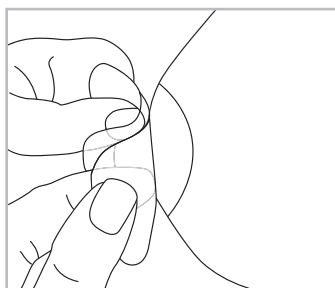
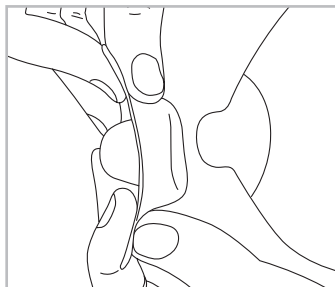
It is important that there is a good flow of milk before trying the nipple shield (two - five days after birth). If used too early the breast milk supply may be delayed and the baby may become tired, frustrated and refuse the breast.

The shield used needs to be the right size for your nipple and the baby's mouth. It needs to fit comfortably over the base of your nipple but not be too wide or too narrow.

A baby attached correctly and directly to the breast will provide good stimulation and drainage for continued milk supply and successful breastfeeding.

Applying the shield

1. Wash your hands in warm, soapy water
2. Warm the shield in warm water first to make it more flexible
3. Gently roll your nipple between your fingers to make it stand out a bit more
4. Turn the shield back on itself, stretch the shield slightly
5. Place the stretched shield over the nipple and release the tension. As the stretched shield returns to its normal shape it will draw up the nipple into the shield cone. This reduces the initial work your baby must do to draw the nipple into the cavity
6. Smooth it down over the breast
7. Hand express a little milk into the shield and give your baby lots of verbal encouragement
8. When your baby is receiving the milk through the nipple shield the suck will be long, slow and rhythmical, swallowing sounds will be heard.



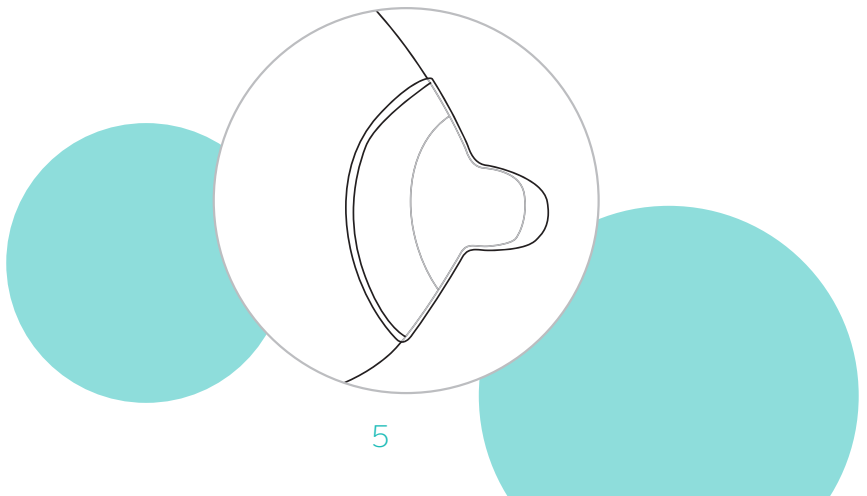
Position and attachment

The principles of positioning and attachment are the same, "chest to chest – chin to breast".

- Baby level with the breast, tucked into the mothers body
- Head tilted slightly back
- Wide open mouth
- Tongue down and forward
- A large mouthful of breast
- Lips flanged outwards
- Chin buried deep into the breast and nose clear
- Rhythmic, deep jaw action once milk flow (let down) has occurred
- Listen to hear swallowing



When the baby detaches the nipple needs to be drawn up into the shield (as pictured below)



Incorrect attachment

- There will be a visible gap between the baby's mouth and the breast
- The feed may be painful
- The baby will get less milk per feed
- The mother's breast may not drain adequately

If you have any concerns it is important to seek help from our maternity team.

Cleaning

To clean your nipple shield after each feed:

- Wash your hands in warm soapy water.
- Rinse the shield in cold water then wash in warm soapy water and rinse in hot water.
- Drain on clean paper towel and store in a clean dry container.

Follow up

Nipple shields are usually considered a temporary measure although a premature baby who starts in a nipple shield may need it for longer. For some mothers and babies a nipple shield may be needed to be used long-term to maintain successful breastfeeding.

Continued support from a health professional is recommended, regular assessments of feeding and growth are important to monitor maternal milk supply and the baby's health.

Weaning from the nipple shield

Remove the nipple shield part way through the breast feed and attempt to attach your baby. If your baby doesn't attach to your breast and becomes distressed then use the nipple shield and try again later.

It is very important to learn effective positioning and attachment. Using a nipple shield with continued poor attachment is unlikely to be helpful in the long term.

Resources and Images

1. Australian Breastfeeding Association (2018) Nipple shields.
2. Australian College of Midwives (2013) Baby friendly health initiative.
3. World Health Organisation (2020) Ten steps to successful breastfeeding.

Images - Gosford Private Hospital and Shutterstock



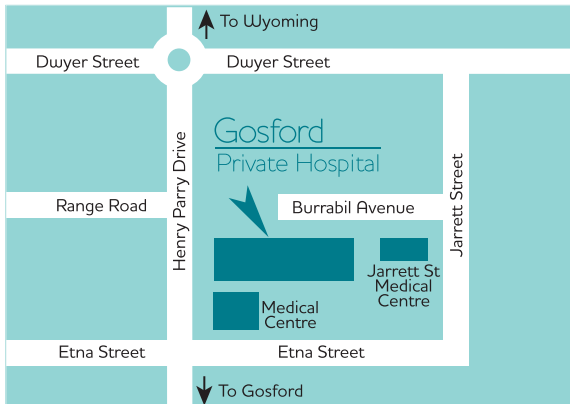
Support

For support and advice concerning breastfeeding issues contact:

Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline
- 02 8853 4999 (7 days)

Tresilian - 02 9787 0855 (24 hr)

Karitane - 02 9794 1852 (24 hr)



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