

# Nipple Shields and Flat or Inverted Nipples

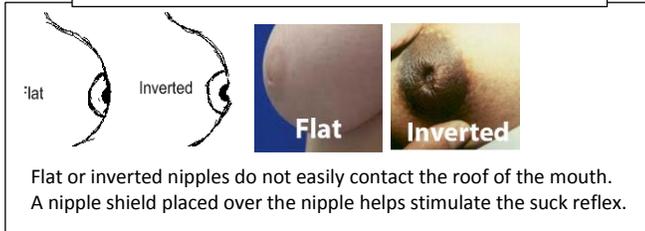
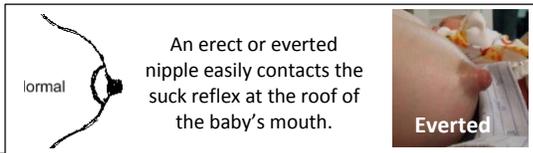
## Nipple Shields



- A nipple shield is considered a last resort to help a baby latch.
- Why? When a shield is on the nipple, the baby relies mostly on suction to remove milk.
- Without the shield, the baby not only sucks, but massages the surrounding breast tissue, which removes milk better and thus maintains milk supply.
- If a shield is used, the goal should be to eventually nurse without it, which will likely require assistance from a breastfeeding expert.
- Some babies never latch without the shield, and it is preferred to use a shield than to stop nursing.

### 3 common reason for using a nipple shield

1. Nipple anatomy makes it difficult to stimulate the suck reflex at the roof of the mouth when baby latches on.



2. The baby has a weak suck reflex which only gets stimulated by the firmer plastic shield in their mouth. Premature babies sometimes need a shield.
3. Nipples are severely sore or traumatized and the shield helps protect them until they can heal.

### Shield use in the hospital

- If the baby doesn't latch or is using a shield by 12 hours of age, pump every 2-3 hours during the day to stimulate milk to come in better.
- If nipples are flat, consider pumping for 5 minutes before nursing to pull the nipple out and then try to latch.
- If no success, try with the shield.
- Even if baby latches with a shield, pump for 10 minutes or so and feed the baby any pumped milk or colostrum.

### Using a shield effectively

- **Sizes:** A Medela standard 24mm shield usually works best for most babies, regardless of their size. A small 20mm shield is sometimes used if baby has a very small mouth or mom has very small nipples.
- The Medela brand is recommended over others.
- Apply water to help it cling to your skin better.
- The cut out portion of the shield should be positioned where the baby's nose will end up.
- Hold baby in close so she doesn't slide on and off the shield.
- The latch with a shield should be attempted in the same manner as without it. It should be deep with the mouth open wide and the lips flanged out.

### Care of a shield

- Wash in hot soapy water. Rinse well and air dry.
- Store it in a baggie or denture cup.
- Keep it out of reach of pets!
- Some moms store it between their breasts!

### Attempt to "re-shape" or "pull out" flat or inverted nipples:

- Gently roll the nipples between your fingers before latching to make them more erect.
- Pump 1-2 minutes before latching.
- You can purchase devices to pull the nipples out.



### Weaning from the shield

- Flat or inverted nipples will hopefully "take shape" over time and/or the baby will figure out how to manage a latch regardless.
  - Most babies will eventually figure it out, if you keep trying.
1. Review the latching information, especially the breast sandwich concept.
  2. Try removing the shield when baby calms down after the milk lets down.
    - When the breast softens, the "sandwich" can be skinnier and go further into the mouth.
    - A flat or inverted nipple might be pulled out under the shield after some suckling.
    - Slip the shield away, dry the breast and the baby's mouth so it isn't slippery, and then latch the baby to the bare nipple.
  3. Skin-to-skin contact may encourage latching without the shield.
  4. If you have difficulty stopping use of the shield, seek help from a lactation expert.

### Long term shield use

- If used long term, monitor the baby's weight to be certain she is removing milk well and thus stimulating the milk supply adequately.
- It will help to pump after nursing at least twice per day as long as the shield is used.
- Mothers who return to work will likely pump this often anyway.
- Don't stress out about using a shield.