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Weaning from a Nipple Shield

Nipple shields are designed mainly for short-term use, therefore it is advisable to wean from it when the original problem – latch-on issues or pain – subsides. However, try not to stress about weaning, if breastfeeding goes smoothly with a nipple shield, it is a better alternative to a problem-filled breastfeeding without a shield. The problem with nipple shields is that your breasts lack stimulation as the baby nurses. That may cause more frequent and longer-lasting feedings. Also, many mothers become frustrated with nipple shields.

The smaller the baby is, the easier weaning from a nipple shield usually is. Babies tend to get used to the status quo and get fussy when things change – especially when it comes to breastfeeding. Therefore, it is advisable to try feeding without a nipple shield at least once a day, so the baby remembers how a bare nipple feels. 💧

Tips for weaning from a nipple shield:

- Take time and let the baby root in skin-to-skin contact, this will stimulate the baby's instincts and he might be able to achieve the correct latch without any effort.
- An inverted nipple can be drawn out by stretching it lightly or using a breast shell before nursing.
- Start feeding with a nipple shield and remove it after a while. The baby may continue feeding without problems as the initial nursing has shaped the nipple and the let-down has occurred.
- After the baby has finished one breast with a nipple shield, try offering the other breast without it. The baby may be more patient when he is not too hungry.
- Pump or express by hand before nursing – the breast becomes softer and it is easier for the baby to latch on.
- Try feeding without a nipple shield at night or when the baby is sleepy – he may not notice.
- Try different feeding positions.
- Start feeding when you notice the first hunger cues – don't wait for crying. A ravenous baby is not willing to try new methods.
- Avoid bottles and pacifiers. The baby latches on bottles and pacifiers with a much narrower latch, which can cause him not to be able to latch on correctly to the breast.
- Some babies are easy to wean from the nipple shield, for others it may be a long road. Keep on trying these tips and be patient.