

Silicone Breast Pump Inserts: Tips for Fit & Function

Understanding Silicone Inserts

Silicone inserts are soft liners that fit inside breast pump flange (breast shield). They help reduce the flange tunnel size to better match nipple size for a more comfortable and effective pumping experience.

Silicone flange inserts can help customize breast pump fit, especially for:

- Smaller nipple sizes
- Wearable pumps and collection cups
- Size adjustments without buying new flanges
- Improving comfort and milk removal

Because every flange and insert is shaped differently, troubleshooting is often needed to find the best combination.

Why Flange Fit Matters

A flange that is too large or too small can cause:

- Nipple pain or rubbing
- Swelling
- Poor milk removal
- Lower milk supply over time
- Damage to nipple tissue

Using the correct flange size — including silicone inserts when needed — can improve comfort and milk flow.

Signs You May Need a Smaller Flange or Insert

You may benefit from a silicone insert if:

- Too much of the areola is pulled into the tunnel
- Your nipple rubs against the sides of the flange
- Pumping is painful
- Your nipple looks swollen or discolored after pumping
- You are not emptying well despite frequent pumping
- Your standard flange feels too large

Things to Know About Silicone Inserts

Feel & Texture

- Silicone inserts can feel very different from hard plastic flanges
- Some silicone inserts are much stickier than others
- Silicone naturally “grabs” onto nipple tissue more than hard plastic

Nipple Movement

- Nipple tissue does not glide as easily through silicone tunnels
- Increased friction may affect comfort and milk removal

Comfort Tips

- Using a small amount of lubrication can help reduce friction (examples: coconut or olive oil)
- Lubrication may improve comfort and nipple movement during pumping

Sizing Considerations

- Silicone inserts often require a slightly larger opening size than hard flanges
- The nipple needs enough room to move freely into the tunnel
- A participant who fits well in a hard plastic flange may need to size up slightly when using silicone inserts

Goal

- Proper fit can improve both comfort and milk removal.

Inserts vary by brand

Different brands may differ in:

- Tunnel length
- Firmness
- Stickiness/grip
- Shape of the tunnel entrance
- Overall comfort

Some inserts are:

- Longer or shorter
- More gradual at the opening
- More firm or more flexible

Common insert sizes:

- 13 mm
- 15 mm
- 17 mm
- 19 mm

- 21 mm

Many standard pump flanges are 24 mm or larger, so inserts help customize the fit without purchasing all new flanges.

General observations:

- Smaller insert sizes are often firmer
- Larger insert sizes tend to feel softer or “squishier”
- Firmer inserts may provide more structure and support

Participants may prefer one style over another based on comfort.

Insert & Flange Compatibility

Not all inserts fit all flanges.

Some hard plastic flanges:

- Are tapered instead of parallel
- Prevent inserts from sitting fully inside the tunnel

In these situations:

- Inserts may bunch, shift, or narrow the tunnel too much
- Some providers trim or cut inserts for better fit when appropriate

How to Choose the Right Size

During pumping:

Your nipple should:

- ✓ Move freely in the tunnel
- ✓ Stay centered
- ✓ Have minimal rubbing
- ✓ Pull in comfortably without excess areola tissue

Popular Silicone Insert Brands

- Maymom
- Legendairy Milk
- Milkdrop
- Bojin
- Lactation Hub
- Ninni Co.
- Freemie
- Pumpin’ Pal / Pumping Pretty

Each brand may feel and perform differently.

Tips for Using Silicone Inserts

1. Insert the silicone liner securely into the flange
2. Ensure the insert lays flat without gaps or folds
3. Center your nipple before starting the pump
4. Start with low suction and increase gradually
5. Reassess fit if pumping becomes painful or output changes

Tips for Success

Encourage participants to:

- Experiment with sizing
- Try different insert brands if needed
- Adjust suction settings
- Reassess fit if milk output changes
- Seek support for ongoing discomfort or low output

Small changes can make a big difference in pumping comfort and milk removal.

Important Reminder

Your nipple size may change:

- In the early postpartum period
- With swelling
- During exclusive pumping
- Over the course of lactation

It is normal to need a different flange size over time.

When to Ask for Help

Contact a lactation professional if you experience:

- Ongoing nipple pain
- Cracked or bleeding nipples
- Low milk output
- Recurrent plugged ducts
- Difficulty finding the right fit

An IBCLC or breastfeeding peer counselor can help assess flange sizing and pumping comfort.

Cleaning & Care

- Wash after each use with warm soapy water
- Rinse thoroughly
- Air dry completely before storing

- Follow manufacturer guidelines for sanitizing
- Replace inserts if they become stretched, torn, or cloudy

Common Troubleshooting Tip

“I used a 15 mm insert and got no milk.”

This is common and does not always mean the insert is the wrong size.

Why?

Silicone inserts may fit differently than hard plastic flanges:

- Silicone creates more friction or “drag” on the nipple
- The tunnel may feel tighter than the labeled size
- The nipple may need more room to move freely
- Vacuum settings may need adjustment

Example:

A participant who pumps well in a hard 15 mm flange may actually need:

- A 17 mm silicone insert inside the flange
- Slightly higher vacuum strength
- More lubrication or repositioning

Silicone inserts often feel different from hard flanges, even when labeled the same size.

Important Counseling Point

If a participant has an abundant milk supply, they may pump adequately with many flange sizes or insert combinations. However, participants with lower supply, elastic tissue, pain, or poor milk removal may need more precise fitting and troubleshooting.

The goal is to help the participant find a setup that:

- ✓ Feels comfortable
- ✓ Removes milk effectively
- ✓ Works with their pump and lifestyle
- ✓ Is sustainable for long-term pumping

Comfortable pumping starts with the right fit!

The “right” insert is the one that helps the participant pump comfortably and effectively.