

6 Things You Need to Know About Inverted Nipples

Plus, the technical term for "outtie" nipples!



by [CARINA HSIEH](#) JAN 31, 2018

208



RUBEN CHAMORRO



While the idea of an everted (pointed outwardly) nipple might be the first image that comes to mind when you think of nipples, not all nipples point out! In fact, inverted nipples, or nipples that point inward, are probably way more common than you'd think. Here, several doctors break down everything you need to know about inverted nipples:

1. Inverted nipples are often genetic. [Dr. Adam Kolker](#) explains that inverted nipples are most often genetic and due to a thickened, short, or underdeveloped lactiferous duct. [Dr. Franziska Huettner](#) of the Plastic Surgery Group of NYC explains that the lactiferous ducts connect the breast gland to the nipple and allow for the passage of milk. She explains, "When these ducts are shortened, they have a tethering effect on the nipple causing it to retract towards the breast."

2. You're not alone! Estimates vary (as does the degree of inversion), but [Dr. Anne Peled](#), MD, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon in San Francisco says that it's thought that as many as 10-20% of women have some degree of inverted nipples. A [1997 study](#) about breastfeeding women found that nearly 10% of participants had inverted nipples.



Example of an inverted nipple.

WIKIPEDIA CREATIVE COMMONS

3. You probably shouldn't be concerned about your inverted nips. [Dr. Huettner](#) explains that inverted nipples are rarely a sign of breast cancer, but if you notice a sudden nipple inversion where you've always had everted (outtie) nipples, or if you notice discharge, that could be cause for concern. If you've always had inverted nipples though, you're likely just fine. [Dr. Peled](#) recommends that women see their doctor any time there's a change in the appearance of their breasts or nipples, just to be sure that they don't require further evaluation like a mammogram or ultrasound.

4. A nipple piercing can sometimes offer temporary improvement. Some people get nipple piercings in order to draw their inverted nipple out. [Dr. Huettner](#) explains that this would most likely only be a temporary solution: "Nipple piercing with a dumbbell or bar can be useful in elevating the nipple and stretching the ducts, which in some cases may provide some degree of improvement." However, once the piercing is removed, the nipple could retract again. [Dr. Peled](#) adds that this would work best on women who have more mild inversion. Also, like all piercings, a [nipple piercing](#) does come with its own set of risks. [Dr. Nirmal Nathan](#) at [Suria Plastic Surgeons](#) in Miami says that he doesn't personally recommend nipple piercings as a solution as the piercing could create additional scar tissue that worsens the inverted nipples.

5. There are surgical options to fix inverted nipples. [Dr. Alyssa Golas](#), MD, cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgeon at NYU Langone Health explains that the most common treatment divides the ducts that cause the nipple to pull inwards. However, this treatment makes it impossible to breastfeed, so be certain that that's something you're okay with before you go in. [Dr. Golas](#) adds that since this cosmetic surgery is usually not covered by insurance, the price will vary by surgeon anywhere from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand.

6. Breastfeeding might be harder for you if you have inverted nipples. [Dr. Peled](#) explains that the milk ducts work normally in women with inverted nipples, however, getting the baby to latch onto flat or inverted nipples can sometimes be tricky. She recommends seeing a lactation consultant to learn which techniques can help your baby latch better with your body. [Dr. Golas](#) also adds that sometimes inverted nipples even become everted through pregnancy!

Follow Carina on [Twitter](#).