Non- Nutritive Sucking

Neonatal Unit

Patient Information Leaflet
Welcome to Neonatal Unit

This leaflet is to provide you with the information you need before reaching a decision on whether or not you are happy to give your baby a dummy.

Dummies and breast feeding can be used as forms of non-nutritive sucking (where a baby sucks without receiving any milk). For preterm babies (babies born before 37 weeks) or babies who are admitted onto the neonatal unit, non-nutritive sucking by use of a dummy may be offered.

Your wishes as parents are very important and it is your choice whether your baby has a dummy or not, whether you choose to breast or formula feed.

Benefits of Non-Nutritive Sucking

Research suggests that offering short periods of non-nutritive sucking for ill and premature babies can:

- Help to soothe a baby during tests and procedures.
- Reduce the experience of some pain.
- Help with breathing.
- Teach the baby to co-ordinate sucking and swallowing, which promotes earlier oral feeding.
- Have a calming effect so a baby may use less energy, which may help improve baby’s growth and weight.
- Give a pleasant feeling in baby’s mouth.
- Help your baby learn to suck and therefore help feeding.
- Stimulate the stomach to make the juices that help the baby digest milk more easily and so improve growth.
- Decrease the time the baby may have to stay in hospital.
- Help wake your baby up for a feed if bottle feeding.
Disadvantages of Non-Nutritive Sucking

Research suggests that offering short periods of non-nutritive sucking for ill and premature babies can:

- Make your baby more reluctant to breast feed. This is because sucking on a dummy is different to sucking technique involved in breast feeding.
- Interfere with the baby's ability to breast feed on demand.
- Lead to less feeds. Babies communicate their need to feed by using their mouth to lick, move and open (feeding cues). Use of a dummy may hide these feeding cues.
Giving your baby a dummy

There are special dummies we provide for very small babies (less than 1.7Kg or 3lb 12 oz). If your baby is bigger than 1.7Kg, you may choose to buy your own dummy or use one of ours.

- Your baby's dummy will be stored in a pot of sterilising fluid kept near to their incubator or cot. Your baby's name will be on the pot along with the date that the sterilising solution was last changed.
- Before giving the dummy to your baby, you may wish to rinse it in sterile water. Please ask your baby's nurse about this.
- When giving your baby a dummy try to gently touch the dummy against baby's lips. When the mouth opens wide place the dummy on top of the tongue. You may need to hold it in place until they begin to suck.
- Allow your baby to suck on the dummy for a couple of minutes before and during an uncomfortable procedure, or if unsettled, until they are calm and resting quietly. If non-nutritive sucking is being used to encourage feeding, it should begin for a couple of minutes before and then during and for a short while after the tube feed.
- When your baby no longer needs the dummy, wash it in warm soapy water, rinse with clean water and then place it back into the sterilising fluid.

Regard the dummy as a short-term, not a long-term habit. It is advised that healthy, term babies are weaned off dummies as soon as possible.
Further information:

- http://www.babycentre.co.uk/a8491/what-is-nipple-confusion

If you have any questions or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet please contact:

The Neonatal Unit: 01384 456111 extension 3364.
Please use this space for any notes you may wish to make:
This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 0730510

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अगर आप इस वर्णित पत्र की नीति व घोषित भाषा का उपयोग करना चाहते हैं, तब उस नंबर 0800 0730510 के संपर्क में आएं।

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