

References

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USE OF DUMMIES

(NON-NUTRITIVE SUCKING)



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Written by Pam Cook on behalf of:
SOUTHERN WEST MIDLANDS NEWBORN NETWORK

Hereford, Worcester, Birmingham, Sandwell & Solihull



You may have not yet given thought as to whether you want your baby to have a dummy.

Dummy/finger/thumb sucking is different to the suck babies use to suck a milk feed. It is called **non-nutritive sucking**.

Babies who are premature or ill can gain great benefit and comfort from non-nutritive sucking.

The urge to suck can be very strong even in sick or very tiny babies.

Your wishes as parents are very important and it is **your choice** whether your baby has a dummy or not, whatever your feeding plans are.

We thought that it might be helpful if we gave you information about non-nutritive sucking so that you can decide whether to give your baby a dummy.

Benefits

Research suggests that offering short periods of non-nutritive sucking:

- Decreases the stress response a baby has to upsetting procedures (3).
- Helps them to calm themselves so they use less energy, which may help them to grow a little faster (3).

- Gives them a pleasant feeling in their mouth when they so often have to endure unpleasant things like suction or the presence of a breathing tube (3).
- Can speed up the maturing of a baby's sucking reflex so that they learn to suck-feed sooner (3,4).
- Stimulates the stomach to make the juices that help the baby to digest their feed more easily so they grow faster(3).
- Can decrease the length of hospital stay in pre-term infants (4).
- Many premature babies will have to be tube fed for a long time before they are able to breast or bottle feed because of their prematurity or illness. Sucking during tube feeding is pleasant and may help babies to associate the satisfying feeling of a full tummy with sucking.
- For a baby that is going to be bottle fed, if they are given a dummy to suck for five minutes before the feed, it helps to get into the best awake state for feeding (3).

Risks

We actively promote breast-feeding in this hospital; dummies are not generally recommended for babies who are establishing breast-feeding, as they may

interfere with early feeding cues and create "teat preference" (1,2).

However, babies born prematurely are a special case, and there is no evidence to show that ***short term*** use of a dummy with preterm breastfed infants has any negative effects provided there is ongoing support for breastfeeding.

Alternatives

Once your baby is stable enough, if you plan to breast feed, your baby may be able to nuzzle at the breast instead of using a dummy.

Your baby may prefer to suck his/her own fingers if he/she is able to get hand to mouth.

We can provide very tiny dummies for tiny babies but ask you to supply your own if your baby can manage a newborn size.