

Dummy use on the neonatal unit

Information for families

This information leaflet is a brief description of when and how we use dummies on the neonatal unit. Please ask a nurse if you would like any more information.

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) dummies

Sometimes babies who are having CPAP will also be given a dummy to suck to help the CPAP to work. The dummy stops air from being pushed out of the baby's mouth and helps the air to go into their lungs.

If your baby has CPAP and is given a dummy, the nurse looking after your baby will change the dummy every day and if it is dirty or has been dropped on the floor. Babies who have been on CPAP with a dummy will stop having a dummy when they stop needing CPAP.

Breastfeeding and dummies

Mothers who would like to breastfeed their babies are advised not to give their baby a dummy until they have fully established feeds with their baby. This means that you have been breastfeeding your baby for four to six weeks and the baby is latching well, feeding and putting on weight.

If dummies are given to breastfed babies before feeding is established, breastfeeding may become difficult. This is because the way that babies suck dummies (with a small, closed mouth) is different to how they breastfeed (with a wide, open mouth). It can be confusing for babies to suck dummies when they are learning how to breastfeed. Mums can sometimes get confused too and give a baby a dummy to settle instead of a breastfeed when the baby is hungry.

If your baby is premature and on CPAP but you would still like to breastfeed them when they are bigger, don't worry about your baby having a CPAP dummy. Having a CPAP dummy doesn't mean that you can't breastfeed your baby.

Surgical babies

Babies who are not allowed to have milk feeds because they have had an operation (or are going to have one) often get upset because they can't feed. Sometimes it is helpful to give these babies a dummy to suck to comfort them.

If your baby has had a dummy while they are not allowed to feed, you can stop using the dummy when you are beginning to breastfeed so that your baby does not get confused. You will be given lots of support on how to breastfeed your baby if this is what you want to do.

If you choose to give your baby a dummy

Nurses on the neonatal unit will not give your baby a dummy without your permission. If you would like your baby to have a dummy to settle, we ask that you are responsible for buying the dummies and sterilising them. If you would like your baby to have a dummy, please bring in a minimum of six dummies. This is so that there will always be a clean dummy ready for your baby if the other dummy gets dirty or is dropped on the floor.

The unit does not have any spare dummies if your baby runs out of clean dummies. Please bring in two pots with secure lids that can also be sterilised. One pot will be for the dirty dum-mies and one pot will be for the clean dummies. When you come to visit your baby, you can bring the clean dummies with you and take away any dirty dummies to be sterilised.

The dummies that you give your baby must meet the European safety guidelines:

- Dummies must be strong enough not to break into small pieces.
- Dummy guards or shields must be large enough that the entire dummy cannot be sucked into the baby's mouth.
- Dummy guards or shields must have holes in them so that your baby's nose does not get blocked when sucking on the dummy.
- Do not buy a dummy with an attached cord or string as this can be a strangulation hazard.
- Old dummies can sometimes get damaged so make sure you check the dummies after sterilising them to make sure they are still safe for your baby.

Checklist for parents/guardians whose babies have dummies:

- six dummies that meet the European safety guidelines
- two labelled pots (such as tupperware) which can be sterilised – one for clean dummies and one for dirty dummies

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

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