

Dummies (Pacifiers)

Metro North Hospital and Health Service (MNHHS) aligns with Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) standards.

MNHHS recommends that dummies (pacifiers) not be used for the well term baby whilst breastfeeding is being established. MNHHS do not supply dummies, so if you choose to give your baby a dummy during your stay in hospital you will need to supply your own.

Dummies are sometimes introduced earlier for some babies, such as for sick term or preterm babies who are unable to suckle or are receiving gastric tube feeds, or if a baby is having a painful procedure.

Issues for consideration if planning to use a Dummy / Pacifier

- Babies will usually feed often in the early days after birth, sometimes up to 10-12 times in a day
- Feeding cues (signs that your baby is ready to feed) can be missed if baby is using a dummy / pacifier (Refer to the Feeding Cues poster)
- Keeping your baby close to you (rooming in) will assist you to respond to your baby's early feeding cues
- It is recommended that you do not introduce a dummy to a healthy, term breastfed baby until breastfeeding is well established (around 4-6 weeks of age)

Using a dummy / pacifier when you plan to breastfeed can:

- Lead you to miss baby's early feeding cues and this may delay your milk "coming in"
- Decrease the number of times you feed your baby
- Reduce the amount of breast milk you make
- Lead to breast engorgement
- Lead to baby having slow weight gain
- Increase baby's risk of middle ear infection and thrush
- Contribute to an earlier return of your fertility

If you choose to use a Dummy / Pacifier:

- See if baby will breastfeed/feed *before* giving a dummy
- Avoid using a dummy to extend the time between feeds; a dummy should NOT replace a feed
- If you have more than one baby (i.e. twins), have a separate dummy/pacifier for each baby
- Regularly clean and decontaminate the dummy (Refer to the *Child Health Information: Your guide to the first 12 months*)
- If the dummy falls out during sleep, do not reinsert it into baby's mouth

Safety tips when using a Dummy / Pacifier

- Check the dummy regularly and throw it away if it is damaged
- NEVER put a dummy into your mouth before offering it to baby
- NEVER dip a dummy into sweet foods
- NEVER put a dummy onto a tie around baby's neck
- The dummy should have an Australian Standards label
- Restrict the use of dummies if baby has chronic or recurrent ear infections

There is some debate around the use of dummies/pacifiers to reduce the risk Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). In Australia dummy use is not suggested as a SIDS risk reduction measure. A review of evidence by the International Society for the Study and Prevention of Infant Death “was unable to provide a definitive recommendation regarding the use of dummies as a specific SIDS risk reduction strategy”, and “in consideration of the significant disadvantages of dummy use, there is insufficient evidence to actively encourage dummy use as a risk reduction strategy at the present time” (Red Nose, NSAG, 2014).

Information adapted from:

- Red Nose. National Scientific Advisory Group (NSAG). 2014. Information Statement: Using a dummy or pacifier. Melbourne, Red Nose. <https://rednose.org.au/article/using-a-dummy-or-pacifier>
- NSW Health “Use and care of dummies (pacifiers)” fact sheet. South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, July 2014
- State of Victoria’s “Promoting Breastfeeding: The Victorian Breastfeeding Guidelines” (2014)

For more information

- Queensland Health booklet “Child Health Information Your guide to the first 12 months”
- 13 HEALTH and local Community Child Health Clinics



National Standard 2. Partnering with Consumers
Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this publication