Use and care of dummies (pacifiers)

Babies under 12 months need their dummy sterilised before use.

It is not recommended that you use a dummy in the first few weeks if you have a healthy, term baby because:

- Your baby needs to learn to breastfeed first. Using a dummy in the first weeks can affect a baby's ability to suck on the breast which may slow your milk production.
- You may miss your baby's hunger signs (e.g. sucking lips/fingers and waking sounds) if your baby has a dummy in their mouth. This may mean your baby gains weight more slowly.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO USE A DUMMY:

- Wait until your baby is about four weeks old before giving a dummy.
- See if your baby would like a feed first before giving a dummy, even if they have only recently had a feed.
- Try feeding, cuddling, patting, rocking, swaddling and check your baby is clean and warm before trying the dummy.
- Remove the dummy once your baby is asleep.
- A dummy is not like a mother's breast, despite the claims of different brands.
- The mouth actions used by a breastfeeding baby promotes optimal jaw and oral development. A dummy does not.

IMPORTANT POINTS

Your baby's dummy should:

- NOT replace a feed
- Only be put in YOUR baby's mouth
- NEVER be sweetened or dipped in any food or flavouring
- Be inspected under light regularly for faults
- NEVER be tied around your baby’s neck
- Fit the mouth comfortably. Use age guidelines for sizing.

CARE OF A DUMMY

- Follow manufacturer's guidelines at all times.
- To kill harmful bugs, bring water to the boil and simmer for five minutes.
- Older babies can have their dummy washed with warm, soapy water and rinsed well.
- Air-dry the dummy and store in a clean, sealed container.
- If your baby has thrush or some other infection, throw the dummy away and treat the symptoms.
- Dummies need to be kept clean and thrown out when they show signs of wear.
- Clean under a tap and not in an adult's mouth. This can transfer germs.
- Only use a dummy that has an Australian Standards label.

Contacts

- Your local Maternity Unit.
- Your Child and Family Health Centre.
- Australian Breastfeeding Association Helpline Ph: 1800 686 268, 7 days a week, or visit www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- For a Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) www.lcanz.org/find-a-consultant.htm
- MotherSafe (Medications in Pregnancy & Lactation Service) Ph: (02) 9382 6539 or 1800 647 848 if outside the Sydney Metropolitan area.
- After-hours telephone advice lines are listed in your baby's Personal Health Record (Blue Book).
- See NSW Health Preparing formula feeds and sterilising bottles factsheet for step-by-step sterilisation instructions.

References

Eat for Health, NHMRC Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health Workers 2012.