

Using a dummy

The aim of this leaflet is to help you think about what a dummy might mean to you and your baby and explain why dummies might be helpful for young babies but can become increasingly problematic for parents and older babies and children.

There are many names given to dummies such as pacifiers, comforters, artificial teats and soothers. They have been in existence for hundreds of years and have been made from a variety of materials including clay, silver, pearl and coral.

The subject of dummies can provoke strong feelings for many parents and the decision whether to use a dummy or not can be difficult. For many parents it can sometimes feel like using a dummy can mean the difference between a crying baby and a contented baby. Other parents have strong feelings about not using a dummy. This may be as a result of having experienced difficulties when using a dummy with another child, seeing older children using dummies continually or wanting to soothe their babies themselves.

Dummies can be useful to pacify and comfort young babies who have few alternative ways of experiencing comfort. It is widely recognised that young babies gain greatest comfort from being held by a familiar, loving adult. However there may be times when this can feel difficult. For example, parents can feel tired, worried, and unsure how their baby is feeling or what they need. Babies can feel anxious and overwhelmed by strong feelings and in the early months of life they may have few means of calming themselves.

Dummies can play a part in helping in two ways. Firstly dummies can help soothe a baby and it can do this by the baby sucking hard and 'holding on' to the dummy. Secondly, they will focus their energy on the sucking and this allows the baby to feel like his anxiety is being 'held' by the dummy. Once the baby is calmed you may then be able to start to use other ways of comforting your baby such as cuddling, touching or talking to your baby.

The dummy may mean different things to different parents. Parents and babies will also have different views about the dummy.

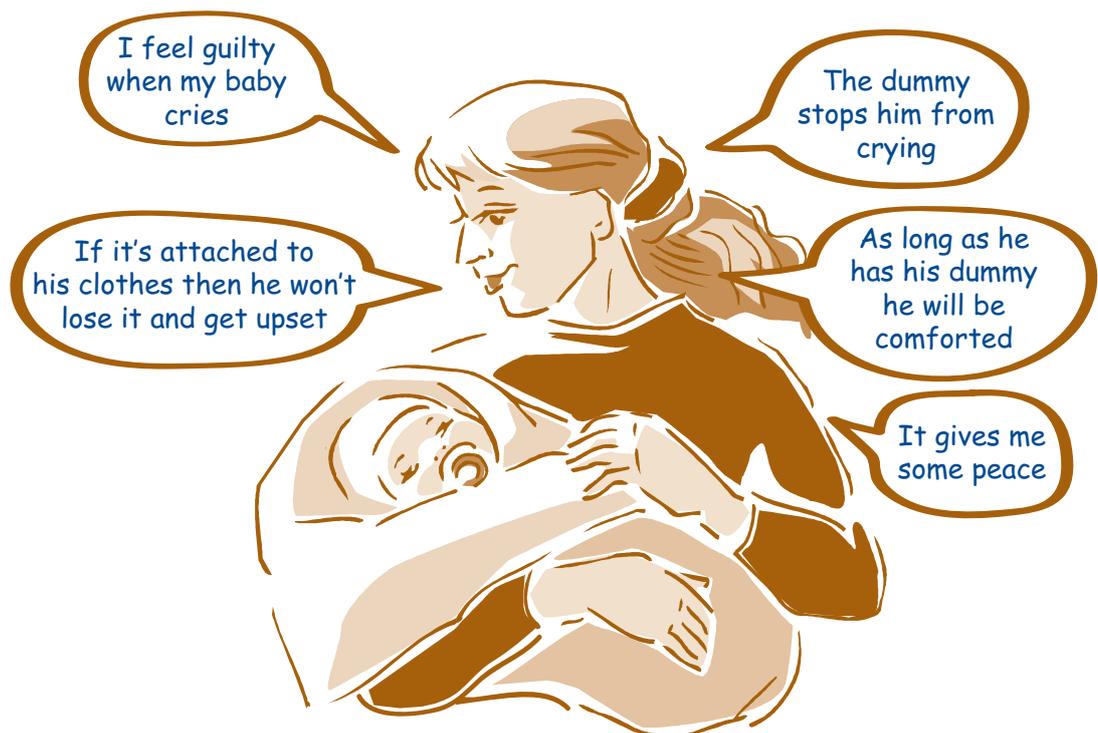
NOTE: This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit www.inourplace.co.uk.

Using a dummy

Your baby's view of her dummy



Parents' view of a dummy



Using a dummy

If a baby has a dummy constantly available to suck then he may only be comforted when his dummy is in his mouth. This means he does not have the opportunity to learn other ways of gaining comfort, which will be more helpful as he gets older. Gradually learning what it's like to feel separate from mum and being able to comfort himself is a healthy and really important stage in a baby's development. The best way for a baby to learn how to soothe himself is to learn from his parents. The dummy can get in the way of a baby learning how to manage the times when mum is not available as it soothes him into feeling he is still connected to her. Prolonged use of the dummy can make separation from mum harder and harder to deal with.

Prolonged use of the dummy can also lead to other developmental delays in the baby's communication skills, thought processes and play, all of which develop out of a sense of being separate. A teddy bear or comfort blanket are much more helpful to a baby and young child and should take the place of a dummy as the infant matures. This is because they 'symbolise' mummy, for example, they take the place of mummy when she is not available, whereas the dummy as we described earlier in the leaflet makes the baby feel that mummy is always available.

Surprisingly, because prolonged use of a dummy can delay psychological development and this can make the baby feel more clingy, and therefore more angry and anxious. Dummies are also thought to play a part in sleep problems as babies often wake when the dummy falls out.

Keeping dummy time to a minimum means:

- The use of the dummy will be more effective – using the dummy to calm your baby so that you can then use other more long-lasting soothing methods, will help your baby to gradually learn to manage their feelings and tolerate separation.
- Less dribble – putting hands, feet, toys and other objects into the mouth for short periods will naturally stimulate the production of saliva. Having a dummy in the mouth for a long time will over stimulate the saliva duct causing excess dribble to make the skin sore and wet the clothes.
- Better muscle development for eating, swallowing and talking – dummies can affect the way the muscles develop possibly leading to delay.
- Allow the correct contact to be made between the tongue and the rest of the mouth for speech sound development.
- More opportunity to practice talking.
- Teeth growing as they should and less likelihood of developing a lisp.

Using a dummy

Tips for preventing dummy dependency

- Before using a dummy take some time to think about the many ways you might be able to comfort your baby
- Use the dummy as a way of initially calming your baby so that you can then develop other ways to soothe him
- Gradually reduce the use of the dummy as you become more confident in calming your baby preferably before six months of age
- Once your baby is asleep take the dummy out of his mouth
- Don't encourage the dummy to become a habit, only give it as a way of calming your baby when he is tired or upset
- Never let your baby babble or child talk with a dummy in his mouth
- Don't leave dummies where your child can see or reach them himself, put it away when it is not needed.



Dummies, cot death and feeding

It is possible that giving a dummy each time a baby is going to sleep can reduce the risk of cot death. If the dummy falls out because the baby is asleep you do not need to put the dummy back in.

If you are breastfeeding it is recommended not to use a dummy until breastfeeding is well established, usually when your baby is about one month old. The risk of cot death reduces after six months of age so stop giving the dummy when your baby is between six and 12 months.

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Breastfeeding: off to the best start

This information is based on information on the NHS choices website

Breastmilk gives babies all the nutrients they need for the first six months of life and helps protect them from infection and diseases. It also reduces mothers' chances of getting certain diseases later in life. Breastfeeding also allows you and your baby to get closer physically and emotionally. So while your child is feeding, the bond between you can grow stronger. Bottle feeding does not give your baby the same ingredients as breastmilk, which is designed to be easy for your baby to absorb and is perfect to help him grow and develop. Also, bottle feeding doesn't provide protection against infection and diseases.

Breastfeeding helps protect your baby against:

- ear infections
- gastro-intestinal infections
- chest infections
- urine infections
- childhood diabetes
- eczema
- obesity
- asthma.

Breastfeeding helps protect mothers against:

- ovarian cancer
- breast cancer
- weak bones later in life.

Women who breastfeed return to their pre-pregnancy figure faster.

What position should you use?

There are lots of different positions for breastfeeding. You just need to check the following:

Are your baby's head and body in a straight line?

If not, your baby might not be able to swallow comfortably.

Are you holding your baby close to you?

Try to support his back, shoulders and neck. He should be able to tilt his head back easily. And he shouldn't have to reach out to feed.

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Breastfeeding: off to the best start

Is your baby's nose opposite your nipple?

Your baby needs to get a big mouthful of breast from underneath the nipple. Placing your baby with his nose level with your nipple will allow him to reach up and attach to the breast well.

Are you comfortable?

It's OK to change your position slightly once your baby is attached to your breast.

How should you attach your baby to your breast?



- Hold your baby close to you, with his nose level with the nipple.



- Wait until your baby opens his mouth really wide with the tongue down. You can encourage him to do this by gently stroking his top lip.
- Quickly bring your baby even closer to your breast.



- Your baby will tilt his head back and come to your breast chin first. He should take a large mouthful of breast. Your nipple should go towards the roof of his mouth.

Breastfeeding: off to the best start

Signs that your baby is feeding well

- Your baby has a large mouthful of breast.
- Your baby's chin is touching your breast.
- It doesn't hurt you to feed (after the first few sucks).
- If you can see the dark skin around your nipple, you should see more dark skin above your baby's top lip than below their bottom lip.
- Your baby's cheeks stay rounded during sucking.
- Your baby rhythmically takes long sucks and swallows. It is normal for him to pause sometimes.
- Your baby finishes the feed and comes off the breast on his own.

How do you know that your baby is getting enough milk?



- Your baby will appear content and satisfied after most feeds.
- He should be healthy and gaining weight after the first two weeks.
- Your breasts and nipples should not be sore.
- After the first few days, your baby should have at least six wet nappies a day.
- He should also pass at least two yellow stools every day.

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Breastfeeding: off to the best start

Tips for successful breastfeeding

Make sure your baby is properly attached to the breast

- You will have a good supply of milk and your baby will get a good feed.
- It will help stop your breasts getting sore.



Try not to give your baby other food or drink

- The more you feed your baby, the more milk you will produce. Giving other food or drink will reduce your milk supply.
- You might increase the chance of your baby getting an infection.

Try not to give your baby a dummy

- It can make it more difficult for your baby to attach to your breast.
- Your baby will be less likely to feed when they need to.

[See leaflet 'Using a dummy']

Don't be scared to ask for help

- It can take a while before you feel confident breastfeeding. Your midwife or health visitor can support you. Or you can contact one of the helplines and organisations that can advise you about breastfeeding.

If you stop breastfeeding, it can be difficult to start again.

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Partners and breastfeeding

It is not unusual for partners to have mixed feelings about breastfeeding. You may feel happy and be looking forward to your baby being breastfed but you may also feel a little anxious and unprepared.

People's perception of what 'female breasts' are for can vary and for some males and females alike they can be seen purely as body parts related to sexuality and attractiveness.

The fact that nature intended breasts to be used for feeding a baby may never have been realised or talked about.

Partners may believe that breastfeeding doesn't really have anything to do with them and may even worry about being left out of the whole feeding experience of their new baby.

Partners may be totally unaware of the vital role they play in the success of their baby being breastfed and there is research to show that dads are very important in many aspects of the breastfeeding experience which includes

- The initial decision by a couple to breastfeed their baby.
- The support offered to the mother, particularly during the early weeks following the birth
- The ongoing support which encourages continuation of breastfeeding beyond the early weeks of a baby's life

Being a parent is about teamwork and sharing in a relationship of bringing up a child. There are lots of things that need to be done for a baby and everything a parent does, even the smallest of things play a vital role in your baby's brain development and emotional wellbeing.

One of the first decisions you can make to help give your baby the best start in life is for your baby to be breastfed as breast milk has many benefits.

Breast milk contains lots of healthy goodness which is 100% natural and will benefit both baby and mum. For example, it can protect your baby from ear, chest and gastro-intestinal infections. And for mum it can lower her risk of developing some cancers.

What can partners do to help a mum and baby breastfeed?

- Help mum find a comfortable position and stay close by in case she needs anything. It can feel supportive to mum if you sit together for a while and enjoy the feeding experience together as a family.
- Offer words and gestures of encouragement as mum may be feeling unsure of how well she is doing.

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Partners and breastfeeding

- Mum and baby will need rest and time for breastfeeding to become established so partners can help by doing shopping, cooking, caring for any other children in the family and ensuring that visitors are not calling too frequently.

Partner's time with baby

- Your baby will love having time with you so get involved with bath time and nappy changing. Try not to see these as chores or jobs to be done, instead see them as special times when you can interact and have fun with your baby.
- Singing and talking with your baby will encourage their physical and brain development and bonding with you
- Take your baby out for a walk either in pram or baby carrier. Your baby will learn to enjoy the outdoors which is good for future exercise and activities. This will also give mum a short break too.
- Once breastfeeding is established mum may wish to try and express breast milk which will give you an opportunity to feed your baby as well.

Be proud that you have given your baby the best start

Coping with other people's opinions

For some partners they may be the first person in the family to have a partner who is breastfeeding their baby and this can create some issues. Some partners have been surprised by how supportive others have been whilst others have received comments and jokes that have caused embarrassment and annoyance.

Being prepared for such reactions can help to manage a situation. You may simply respond by saying something like: *'We decided as parents that we wanted to give our baby the best start in life and breastfeeding will do that and we're really pleased with our choice.'*

In general, negative comments can soon become boring to listen to and generally stop; however, if they persist keep calm and have a quiet word requesting the person to stop. Sometimes people don't realise that they are causing offence.

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Partners and breastfeeding

Your relationship with your partner

Couples are often concerned if breastfeeding will affect their relationship and sex life. In the early days after childbirth both partners may be feeling overwhelmed and tired whilst they adapt to their new baby. Also, mum may have some physical issues to recover from such as stitches, back pain and breast tenderness.

Talking to each other about how you are feeling is really important. It is not uncommon for you both to feel hesitant in resuming sexual contact and you both may feel unsure about how to become intimate again.

Some couples may misunderstand how the other feels, for example a woman may feel sensitive about her changing body and may have anxieties that their partner has lost interest in her.

Initially sexual intercourse may be uncomfortable and it is not unusual for breast milk to seep out from the breasts at this time so have a small cloth nearby. Just remember to go at a pace that suits you both. A cuddle and sometime lying together may be a good way of becoming close and intimate again.

If you would like any further information please speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

For more information visit www.inourplace.co.uk