

Pre - Feeding

Introducing Taste, Smell and Milk Drops

Feeding begins long before your baby starts eating

Positive Taste Experiences

- ▶ A baby will swallow ~1 liter of amniotic fluid a day when in utero where they are exposed to mom's flavonoids. These same flavonoids are present in your breast milk and your baby will recognize them.
- ▶ At 20 weeks gestation your baby's taste buds begin to develop with 7,000 of them developed by term.
- ▶ At 24 weeks gestation taste is functional.
- ▶ At 26-28 weeks a baby can recognize sweet, salty, bitter and sour tastes and will pull away from unpleasant input.

- ▶ Preterm Infants miss out on the practice of swallowing and muscle development when they are born early.
- ▶ You can help provide positive touch, smell, taste and swallowing experiences depending on gestational age and developmental readiness. These experiences help with normal development and hopefully prevent feeding and swallowing issues.

Introducing Taste and Smell



- ▶ Give your baby good sensory experiences during and around care times
- ▶ Good sensory experiences include:
 - ▶ Containment/hand hugging
 - ▶ Two-person cares
 - ▶ Kangarooing (skin-to-skin)
 - ▶ Preemie massage as taught to you by your developmental therapist (OT/ST)
 - ▶ Exposure to normal light and sound
 - ▶ Exposure to normal smells
 - ▶ Re-scent bonding blankets and use them regularly
 - ▶ Dry your hands before touching the isolette or your baby after using the hand sanitizer

Introducing Taste and Smell



▶ DO NOT:

- ▶ Use strong perfumes/lotions and other strong scents (cigarette smoke, laundry detergent) from your clothing and skin - especially before skin to skin care
- ▶ Close the isolette doors right away after using an alcohol pad
- ▶ Leave alcohol pads in the isolette after use
- ▶ expose baby to cavi wipes, hand sanitizer and rubbing alcohol all of which are strong and bad smells that can cause stress and affect brain development

Introducing Taste and Smell



- ▶ Good oral sensory experiences include:
 - ▶ If needed, gentle oral suctioning and mask changes
 - ▶ Place drops of colostrum or breast milk on a gauze pad and leave near your baby for smelling
 - ▶ Place a Q-tip with colostrum or breast milk on it (milk swab) in the front of your baby's mouth so they can lick or suck on it (for babies who are very small/less than 30 weeks)
 - ▶ Only give milk swabs if your baby accepts it, Stop if they do not accept it
 - ▶ Nuzzle at a pumped breast during Kangarooing, if your infant is awake and opening their mouth to try to suck, let them (for babies around 32 weeks and older)
 - ▶ Give vitamins and medications through the feeding tube as long as possible so your baby will not have other tastes - only your breast milk

Milk Swabs/Colostrum Swabs



Colostrum Swabs

- ▶ Milk swabs during the 1st 3 days of life are called colostrum swabs.
- ▶ Benefits of colostrum swabs include:
 - ▶ Helping to build GI flora
 - ▶ Colostrum is anti bacterial, antiviral and anti inflammatory
 - ▶ Can be a barrier against respiratory and GI infections
 - ▶ Provides 1st positive oral/flavor experiences
- ▶ Infant **MUST** be accepting of the swab, never force a swab into a baby who is shut down or has mouth clamped shut
- ▶ Goal is to absorb the colostrum into the mucosa. They are not practicing swallowing with this therapy

Sucking

- ▶ While your baby is learning to suck for feeding, your baby will begin:
 - ▶ Sucking on your finger or pacifier
 - ▶ Sucking milk drops off a pacifier
 - ▶ Nuzzling/sucking on a pumped breast
 - ▶ Nuzzling at your breast or suck on a pacifier while they are getting their tube feeding.
- ▶ Infants are often ready for a pacifier at 28-30 weeks
 - ▶ They usually start with small sucking bursts of 2-3 and then will progress to longer bursts.
 - ▶ If your baby has a de-sat or brady, take the paci out to let them recover



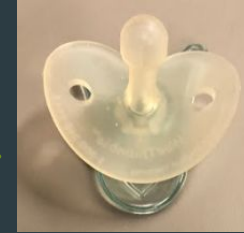
Pacifier Benefits

1. Pacifiers help decrease pain
 - ▶ Pain prevention is our priority
 - ▶ Research shows sucking during painful procedures or while in pain calms and even reduces pain for infants
 - ▶ This does not mean your baby will be hooked on a pacifier for self soothing
2. Pacifiers provide sucking practice and feeding skills
 - ▶ A pacifier will not make it harder to breastfeed



Pacifiers in the NICU

- ▶ 3 sizes
 - ▶ Wee Thumbies for babies less than 30 weeks
 - ▶ Purple Premature pacifiers for babies 30-33 weeks
 - ▶ Teal pacifiers are the same size as the bottle nipple. These are for babies older than 34 weeks or babies who are showing signs they are ready to eat.



Pacifier Size

- ▶ Pacifiers need to be the correct size to improve feeding skills
 - ▶ When the pacifier is too small it can change the tongue groove causing your baby to suck in the front of the mouth or prevent them from using their whole tongue
 - ▶ Rule of thumb: If your baby is nipping (sucking or feeding from a bottle) they should be using a teal pacifier.
 - ▶ Talk to your developmental therapist (OT/ST) before introducing an outside pacifier to your baby.

Pacifiers for Feeding Skills

- ▶ Pacifiers help to create a curved tongue groove.
 - ▶ A good tongue groove is required for latching to a bottle or breast to get better suction for feeding
 - ▶ A full-term baby is born with a tongue groove, but preemies are not.
- ▶ Practicing sucking skills with a pacifier leads to better oral feeding
 - ▶ Providing pacifiers alone or with milk drops early in life can help with oral feeding down the road.

Milk Drops

- ▶ Milk drops is providing a small drop from a syringe in the corner of your baby's mouth while they are sucking.
- ▶ Benefits:
 - ▶ Build motor skills of feeding safely with controlled bolus
 - ▶ Positive taste and smell experiences
 - ▶ Promotes parent bonding from increased participation in nurturing
 - ▶ Milk drop experiences should be provided by parents whenever possible once safe plan has been established
- ▶ Your baby will likely be 31-32 weeks or older
- ▶ Your baby needs to be stable breathing on whichever oxygen level they are using while sucking on a pacifier
- ▶ Ask your nurse how to make milk syringes of your breastmilk or formula
- ▶ Make sure a nurse or therapist are with you for the 1st time giving drops
- ▶ Drops should be very small and given several seconds apart (watch your baby cues)
- ▶ Your baby should be in sidelying when you give them milk drops

