



Pain relief and your baby

Your baby can feel pain whatever their size or age. However, babies born early may not be able to settle or feel secure as quickly as an older baby might. Some research suggests that some premature babies can experience pain just from being touched. Current research shows that a baby's early experience of pain may influence how they react to pain when they are older.

In order for the Special Care team to care for your baby, protect them from illness and detect any problems early, your baby may need to have some tests and procedures. Some of these are painful. Babies who have more problems will often need more procedures. However, staff can teach you how to recognise when your baby is in pain and show you ways to help.

Painful tests and procedures such as bloods and injections are kept to a minimum; we use the finest needles possible and take the smallest quantities of blood. Where possible, care and procedures are performed at the same time to allow your baby to have adequate time to rest.

Sucrose can be given as pain relief before and during any painful procedure. Research shows that the most effective pain relieving methods to use for minor painful procedures is

At present, research shows that sucrose is a safe and effective method of pain relief. Administering sucrose does not affect feeding as the amount given is so small.

Can breast milk be used as pain relief?

Breast milk is sweet too, but some studies have shown it is not as effective as sucrose. However, if you prefer breast milk to be used instead of sucrose, please speak to a member of staff. If your baby is well enough to feed, then you may be able to put him/her to the breast during the procedure if this is practical.

Babies use dummies for non-nutritive sucking and comfort. Non-nutritive sucking is when a baby sucks without getting any milk. During a procedure it may not be possible for you to feed or hold your baby, and so a dummy is the best way to comfort them. Research has shown that non-nutritive sucking reduces the pain experienced by a baby.

Babies often become upset during uncomfortable procedures. The most effective pain relief is to use a dummy and sucrose. If you wish you can bring in your own dummy from home, however, if your baby is premature, SCBU has specially designed dummies for small mouths. This may be best for your baby until he/she has grown a little.

In addition to using pacifiers for pain relief, they are also used on the ward:

- to help your baby settle

- for comfort

- when they are not having any feeds

- when they are receiving help with their breathing using CPAP

- if they are pre-term babies and are having tube feed

- for babies with mouth abnormalities

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