



Australian College of
Midwives

ACM: For midwives. With women. For the future.

POSITION STATEMENT

Use of Pacifiers (Dummies) for the Healthy
Term Breastfed Baby

Issued August 2023

The Australian College of Midwives position on the Use of Pacifiers for the Healthy Term Breastfed Baby.

The Australian College of Midwives (ACM) is the **national peak professional body for midwives in Australia** and supports continuous improvement of the midwifery profession. ACM supports and encourages women to pursue and achieve their personal breastfeeding and infant feeding goals without prejudice.

Definitions

A pacifier (also commonly referred to as a dummy, soother, or comforter) is a silicone, rubber or plastic oral device given to an infant or other young child for non-nutritive sucking purposes¹.

A term baby is 37 to 40 weeks gestational age, and a neonate is an infant, less than 28 days old².

Background

Breastfeeding promotes the healthy growth and development of infants and young children. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommends exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age and the continuation of breastfeeding until 12 months of age and beyond³. Through [Baby Friendly Health Initiative](#), and endorsement of international recommendations and declarations, ACM supports breastfeeding best practice for all midwives and health professionals.

Key Principles

1. Women will be provided with unbiased evidence-based information during pregnancy and early parenthood to facilitate informed decision-making regarding pacifier use.
2. Midwives and health professionals will provide appropriate, sensitive, non-judgemental care to support parents with their decision-making.
3. Midwives and health professionals should reaffirm the standards of the [Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#).
4. Midwives and other health professionals should not promote, offer, or supply pacifiers to healthy term exclusively breastfeeding babies, including under the following circumstances:
 - birth weight greater than 2,500 grams⁴;
 - less than four weeks of age; or
 - before breastfeeding has been established⁵.
5. Midwives and health professionals should discuss, demonstrate, and provide written information on a range of settling techniques for new parents to provide alternatives to the introduction of a pacifier.

Achieving Best Practice

Midwives and health professionals should:

1. Use flexibility, assessing the unique situation and needs of the family when making practice suggestions.
2. If a pacifier has been introduced, sensitively inquire, determine, and document any underlying maternal or infant pathology. Consult and refer⁶ if a concern is noted.

3. Support and encourage breastfeeding according to baby's nutritional needs, rather than using the pacifier to develop a set feeding schedule. Encourage mothers not to substitute a feed with a pacifier.
4. Discuss and educate with parents the importance of appropriately responding to the baby's feeding cues. Offer recommended settling strategies in the first instance. If a pacifier has been introduced, use only after the feed has been completed.
5. Encourage breastfeeding as a source of analgesia to reduce any pain associated with invasive procedures⁷.
6. Be aware of the mandatory Australian Standards – Consumer Goods (Babies' Dummies and Dummy Chains) Safety Standard 2017⁸. Further identify to parents that Internet purchases will only comply with the country of origin, and not necessarily Australia.
7. Discuss harm minimisation strategies to decrease any risk of adverse events. Adverse events include choking, contamination, allergy, and dental caries.

Resources to Guide Practice

ACM supports the use of the following resources to guide midwives and health professionals in their practice:

Australian College of Midwives (2021). *BFHI Handbook for Maternity Facilities*. Retrieved from <https://bfhi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BFHI-Handbook-Maternity-Facilities-Last-Revised-Feb-2021.pdf>

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The Australian College of Midwives acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live.

END

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https://www.rch.org.au/rchcpg/hospital_clinical_guideline_index/Ward_management_of_a_neonate/#Definition_of_Terms
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<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/breastfeeding-practices>
4. Australian Government. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2022). National framework for protecting Australia's children indicators. *0.4 Low birthweight*. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/nfpac/contents/national-framework-indicators/0-4-low-birthweight>
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