



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Sucrose

as pain relief for babies
on the Trevor Mann Baby Unit
and Special Care Baby Unit

Patient information

Do babies experience pain?

While your baby is here on the Trevor Mann Baby Unit / Special Care Baby Unit, it may be necessary for us to undertake various procedures, such as taking blood samples and putting in drips (cannulas). Research has shown that even premature babies are capable of experiencing pain. Therefore, we aim, as far as possible, to minimise any potential discomfort.

What can be done to reduce any pain my baby might feel?

For some procedures, medicines may be given to reduce pain. But at times, it may be inappropriate or not possible for us to do so. This may be because of your baby's age or condition so we look to other measures which can also play an important role in reducing pain or distress.

These may include containment holding (with still hands cupped around your baby's head and across their hips or bottom, as shown in the picture), cuddling, breast-feeding or chestfeeding and allowing your baby to suck (on a finger, pacifier or teat) either during or after the procedure.

If you are present on the Unit and wish to remain with your baby during the procedure, our doctors and nurses may advise you how you can help to comfort your baby in these ways. Alternatively, one of the nurses or doctors may do this on your behalf.



How can sucrose help to relieve pain?

In addition to these measures, several pieces of research have also identified that dropping liquid sucrose (a sweet tasting solution) onto the tongue may also help to reduce crying and other signs of pain in babies. It is widely used in neonatal units in America and throughout the United Kingdom. It is believed that tasting this sweet solution produces a natural release of the body's own painkillers. We know that putting the sweet solution down a baby's feeding tube does not have the same effect and so the solution needs to be placed onto the front part of the baby's tongue, where most of their taste receptors are located. We are able to give sucrose instead of other stronger painkillers, for procedures.

Does sucrose pose any risk to my baby?

Sucrose is considered to be safe and effective for reducing pain. However, more research is required into the long-term effects of sucrose use and the effect of repeated doses of sucrose. We do know, however, that research has found that giving sucrose to babies decreases their crying time and other signs of pain such as certain facial expressions (*Cochrane Library 2006*).

Are there any side effects to this treatment?

There are no known side effects of this treatment. We know that sucrose cannot cause decay to teeth that have not yet appeared.

Who decides whether my baby will receive sucrose?

Together, you and the team of doctors and nurses caring for your baby can decide whether it is appropriate for your baby to receive sucrose prior to a procedure. Please tell us if you would prefer that sucrose was not given to your baby.

How much sucrose will my baby be given?

Between 0.2ml-2ml of sucrose solution will be put onto your baby's tongue by syringe. This is usually done about two minutes before the procedure and can be repeated.

Where can I find out more information?

If you have any further questions, please ask one of the nurses or doctors on the Unit when you visit or telephone us on:

01273 696955 Ext. 64377 (TMBU)
or 01444 441881 Ext. 68489 (SCBU).

**This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care
in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath**

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