



Sucrose for Minor Painful Procedures

Whānau/Family Information – Neonatal Services

Pēpi/babies admitted to a neonatal unit may need ongoing invasive procedures as part of their medical care. These procedures may cause pain and discomfort. Pēpi are always prescribed pain relief prior to more painful procedures, but very little has routinely been given for minor painful procedures. Worldwide research has shown that when sucrose is given before minor painful procedures such as heel pricks, IV insertion and eye examinations it helps to reduce much of the pain and discomfort felt.

Sucrose is given from a syringe onto the front of the tongue in small amounts (up to 0.1-1.0ml depending on age). The dose may be repeated if needed.

The sweetness of the sucrose appears to raise the Pēpi pain threshold so that the pēpi feels less pain and cries less. There are specific conditions where it would be inadvisable to give sucrose. These are listed in the Neonatal Unit drug protocol. While there has been no evidence of pēpi becoming conditioned to sweeteners, it is advisable to not use sucrose at home for soothing your pēpi.

There is evidence that expressed breastmilk if available (or breastfeeding) during painful procedures provides an alternative to sucrose.

Keeping your pēpi in skin to skin is also an excellent option to keep them settled for such procedures. Other supports such as use of your voice (talking/singing/humming), reassuring touch, and/or swaddling can also help soothe your pēpi.

The nurse caring for your whānau will be able to explain the process and help to answer any questions you may have...

