Protocol for the cleaning and sterilisation of pacifiers

Rationale

- Using a pacifier is a parental choice determined by the needs of their newborn, infant or child.

- Pacifiers are used within the neonatal intensive care unit for non-nutritive sucking as part of the routine approach to individualised developmental care for the preterm or sick infant to promote physiological stability, provide comfort and the opportunity to develop oral-motor skills.

- Pacifiers may be associated with a decreased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (Ponti 2003, Hauck et al. 2005).

- Recent research shows that the use of pacifiers do not interfere with breast feeding in motivated mothers (Jenik et al 2009, Kramer et al. 2001) and as a result, the baby friendly initiative does not discourage the use of pacifiers in breastfeeding infants (Jaafar et al. 2011 also cited by the baby friendly initiative).

- Advice to parents about cleaning and the appropriate use of pacifiers should be part of the routine guidance given by nursing staff.

Practice

- Pacifiers need to be cleaned first by using liquid detergent and warm water. This process removes a high proportion of micro-organisms, organic matter, grease and lubricants, which might otherwise protect organisms during the sterilisation procedure (Rutala et al and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC) 2008)

- Pacifiers should be kept in a clean, dry container with a lid whenever the pacifier is not in use. The pacifier container must be labelled with the baby’s name, hospital number and their date of birth. It is important that the label is not placed on the pacifier in order to maximise the effectiveness of the sterilization process for the same reason as above. A permanent marker may be used to write the infants' name on the pacifier, particularly when pacifiers are used for twins and triplets in the same cot.

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- Pacifiers must be sterilised once a day using a Steri-Sac. It is essential that the baby’s name is written on the Steri-Sac to ensure it is single patient use. Since the Steri-Sac can be used up to 20 times, it is crucial that each use is documented on the sac by ticking the box on the Steri-Sac.

- Use Clinell wipes to clean the pacifier container each time the pacifier is sterilised.

- Document on the nursing care plan when the pacifier has been sterilised.

- Always check that pacifiers are in good condition. Pacifiers should be discarded if there are visible cracks, tears, swelling or if they have a grainy or sticky texture (Antonia and Nelson 2012).

References:


- Kramer MS et al. 2001 Pacifier use, early weaning, and cry/fuss behavior: a randomized controlled trial. JAMA 286 (3): 322-6
