

## Facilitating Oral Feeding in Preterm Infants

### Research overview

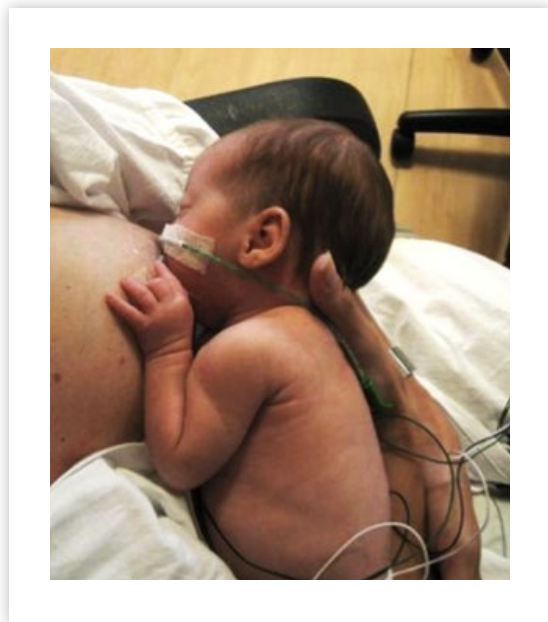
Preterm infants typically are unable to suck all of their feeds due to a weak suck and immature coordination of sucking, swallowing and breathing (SSB). The inability to suck all feeds slows the establishment of breastfeeding and often delays discharge from hospital.

As bottle feeds are offered when the breastfeeding mother is not available, we wish to understand both the progression of breastfeeding skills and the effect of different bottle teats on the development of feeding skills in the preterm infant.

In collaboration with Prof Karen Simmer, we aim to determine the progression of feeding skills over time by measuring sucking strength, coordination of SSB, physiological stability (heart rate and oxygen saturations) and milk intake during breastfeeding and bottle feeding at 33, 34 and 35 weeks corrected gestational age.

The influence of maternal breastmilk production, breast fullness and use of nipple shields will be examined. We will also investigate the effect of two types of teats on breastfeeding outcomes; a standard teat and a vacuum triggered teat. While we have previously shown that use of the vacuum triggered teat facilitated a sucking action similar to breastfeeding and earlier discharge from hospital, we will determine the effects of regular use of this teat on the development of feeding skills, physiological stability and breastfeeding outcomes to 3 months of age.

Piloting of the study is close to completion and we look forward to commencing recruitment in the near future.



### THE TEAM

**Investigator**  
Assoc/Prof Donna Geddes

**Sponsors**  
Women and Infants Research Foundation  
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