

You may notice your baby begin to suck her fingers or thumb during the first 3 months of life. For breastfed babies, this may be a sign that the infant may need more time at the breast. You may choose to introduce a pacifier, sometimes called a soother.

It is better for your baby to suck on a pacifier than a thumb or a finger. Pacifiers are less likely to cause problems with tooth development than thumb and finger sucking. Pacifiers are usually discontinued at an earlier age because they are disposable. This allows parents to have control over when the pacifier is discontinued.

The sucking action of a pacifier may settle a fussy baby as the sucking helps sooth the baby. If it is used to help your baby go to sleep, make sure your baby is closely supervised.

New studies* show that pacifier use during the first year of infancy may reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). This is because the action of sucking a pacifier may help infants who are at risk of SIDS from sleeping too deeply to wake themselves.

If you are thinking about using a pacifier, there are some points to consider:

- Early pacifier use (in first 6 weeks) is not recommended as it interferes with milk supply. Babies need to nurse frequently in the first 6 weeks. Soothing baby at the breast stimulates milk production.
- Sucking action used for breastfeeding is different and may cause nipple confusion, leading to early weaning.
- Long periods of pacifier use may affect a baby's oral growth and development and jaw formation. Pacifier use may increase the risk of middle ear infections.
- There may be a risk of diarrhea due to germs the infant can ingest from the pacifier.
- Pacifiers are disposable. Parents have more control when it is time to break the habit.
- If latex allergy may be a concern, consider using a silicone pacifier.



*American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry's Recommendation on Pacifier Use

(turn over)



Accountable



Collaborative



Common Goals



Dedicated



Evidence-Based Practice



Wellbeing

Soothing with Safety

If your baby is not interested in a pacifier try other ways to calm your baby. Sometimes a change of position or holding, cuddling or carrying your baby may be all that is needed.

If you have chosen to offer your baby a pacifier, remember the following:

- Wait until breastfeeding is well established, usually 4 to 6 weeks.
- Offer the pacifier only after and between feedings. Do not use the pacifier to delay or replace a feeding.
- Do not use the pacifier to replace the comfort provided by parents or if breastfed, the comfort from suckling at the breast.
- Do not clean the pacifier by “rinsing” it in your own mouth. You will spread germs to your baby that may lead to tooth decay or illness.



- Do not coat the pacifier with sugar, honey or other sweet substances as this can cause tooth decay. Honey has been associated with food poisoning in infants under one year of age.
- Use a one-piece design pacifier with a nipple soft enough to flatten out against the roof of the mouth.
- Wash it thoroughly with soap and water before the first use and several times a day.
- Check the pacifier often by pulling the nipple to make sure it is in good condition. Replace the pacifier every one to two months or when the nipple is cracked, torn or sticky. If baby is on medication, her saliva may break down the rubber in the nipple faster than normal.
- Do not secure the pacifier with a string or strap long enough to get caught around baby’s neck. This can cause serious injury or death.
- Use the right size of pacifier. They are sized by age.
- Keep a few identical pacifiers on hand. Many babies refuse a substitute pacifier.