

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT PACIFIERS?

INFANTS NEED TO SUCK

Infants have a need to suck even before they are born and even when they are not feeding. Sucking that is not associated with feeding is termed non-nutritive sucking and is very beneficial for infants. Non-nutritive sucking, for example, has been shown to help hospitalized premature infants gain weight better. Sucking can also help a baby comfort and settle himself.

Sucking on mother's breasts, sucking on a parent's finger, sucking on their own fingers or thumbs, sucking on pacifiers – there are many ways that infants can meet their need for non-nutritive sucking. You may be able to help influence your infant's behavior and choice of non-nutritive sucking, but please remember that your baby has her own temperament and desires. Please observe your own infant and learn how to comfort your own baby. You will know your baby better than anyone else.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF PACIFIERS?

1. Pacifiers help the infant calm or soothe himself, especially when tired or frustrated.
2. It is easier for parents to control the use of a pacifier, but more difficult to control thumb or finger sucking. When parents decide that it is time to stop using the pacifier, they can simply throw the pacifier away. Not possible when an infant is sucking her thumb or fingers!
3. Pacifiers may cause fewer problems with dental malocclusion than thumb-sucking.
4. Pacifiers have been shown to decrease pain when infants have undergone painful procedures such as circumcision, immunizations, and blood tests.

Please note that breastfeeding provides the same benefits as pacifiers – comforting, pain relief, and decreased dental problems. However, if you are breastfeeding, feel free to find other ways to comfort your baby.

WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES OF PACIFIERS

1. Pacifiers may cause difficulties with breastfeeding. When introduced too early, the infant may develop “nipple confusion” and have difficulty latching correctly. Some studies demonstrate that infants who use a pacifier may not breastfeed as long as those who do not use a pacifier.
2. Pacifiers may contribute to dental problems (cavities and overbite) if used too long.
3. Pacifiers may contribute to more frequent ear infections if used for long periods of time when children are in day care.
4. There are safety concerns with pacifiers.
 - a. Pacifiers can deteriorate and come apart. The small parts of the pacifier can cause choking and death.
 - b. Pacifiers that are tied around an infant's neck can cause strangulation

- c. Pacifiers can carry germs and contribute to infections.

IF I CHOOSE TO USE A PACIFIER, WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

When to use a pacifier

- Never start using a pacifier before breastfeeding is fully established. This usually occurs by the time your infant is 3 – 4 weeks old.
- Never offer a pacifier as a substitute for a feeding.
- Try other ways of soothing your baby before using a pacifier. You may find that your baby is hungry, tired, needs a diaper changed, or wants to interact with you.

How to use a pacifier

- Always sterilize the pacifier by boiling in hot water for 5 minutes before it is first used. Allow the pacifier to cool before giving it to your baby.
- Wash the pacifier frequently with hot, soapy water to decrease the growth of bacteria
- Do not “clean” the pacifier by sucking on it yourself. This may spread germs from you to your child.
- Check frequently for cracks in the pacifier and do not use if the pacifier has any evidence of deterioration.
- Do not place sugar, honey, or any other sweet substance on the pacifier as this can cause tooth decay. Honey can also cause botulism, a serious infection of infants.
- Do not tie a pacifier around your infant’s neck since this can lead to strangulation.
- Do not make your own pacifier out of bottle nipples or other objects. These can be inhaled into your baby’s airway and can cause choking or death.
- Do not allow your older toddler to use the pacifier for long periods of time.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD STOP USING A PACIFIER?

By the time your infant is one year old, begin limiting the time that you allow your toddler to use the pacifier. You may choose to allow your toddler to use the pacifier just before naps and bedtime.

When you are ready to help your child stop using a pacifier, you can...

- Provide your toddler with another way to comfort herself. A stuffy or “lovey” can help your child make the transitions between awake and sleep time or home and daycare.
- When your child is older, you may have a special celebration when the pacifier is no longer used.
 - The pacifier may be taken by the “pacifier fairy” and replaced with a special stuffy
 - The pacifiers may all be collected and taken to the toy store to be “given to the babies who need them” while another toy is found for the toddler.’

WHAT ABOUT PACIFIERS and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

Some research implies the use of pacifiers may decrease the risk of SIDS. However, the research is difficult to interpret. The American Academy of Pediatrics states “consider offering a pacifier at naptime and bed time.” Their entire statement can be found at www.aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;116/5/1245 The Canadian Paediatric Society does not encourage pacifier use as a way to prevent SIDS, and their statement can be found at www.cps.ca/English/statements/CP/cp03-01.htm

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