

Pacifiers

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

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, if used correctly. Pacifiers are disposable and can be discontinued at an earlier age. Parents have control of when the pacifier is discontinued.

The sucking action of a pacifier may settle a fussy 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.

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

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

- early pacifier use (in first 6 weeks) is not recommended as it interferes with milk supply. Babies need to nurse frequently in the first six weeks. Soothing baby at the breast stimulates milk production.
- sucking action used for breastfeeding and the pacifier 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.
- risk of diarrhea because of germs the baby can ingest from the pacifier.
- if allergies may be a concern, consider using a silicone pacifier.
- pacifiers are disposable, so parents have more control when it is time to break the habit.



Soothing With Safety

If your baby is not interested in a pacifier try other ways to calm your baby. Sometimes a change of his 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.
 - use a one-piece design pacifier with a nipple soft enough to flatten out against the roof of the mouth.
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- A photograph of a baby lying down, wearing a white shirt and a red and black vest, with a pink pacifier in their mouth. The baby is holding a green blanket.
- 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, 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.

For further information contact the dental health professional at your local public health office.