

The Pacifier Decision: A Guide for Parents

The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide parents with current information about the use of pacifiers for their breastfeeding baby and to assist them in making an informed decision regarding pacifier use. All new parents need to explore their own beliefs and preferences regarding pacifier use for their breastfeeding baby.



The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, the International Lactation Consultant Association, the United States Breastfeeding Committee and the American Academy of Pediatrics all recommend that pacifiers should be avoided until breastfeeding is well established.

Pros of Pacifier Use:

- ♥ Premature babies who are tube-fed learn to suck during feedings and prepare for oral feedings.
- ♥ Babies with special needs may benefit from the soothing and calming effects of sucking when they are unable to feed.
- ♥ Sucking comforts babies during minor painful medical procedures such as heel sticks, blood draws and injections. When possible, breastfeeding your baby during this time is the best option to reduce pain and provide comfort.
- ♥ Pacifiers can be used as an occasional substitute for babies' sucking needs when mother and baby are not together.
- ♥ Research has found that breastfeeding reduces the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends delaying pacifier use until one month of age to ensure that breastfeeding is firmly established; then consider offering a pacifier at naptime and bedtime.

Remember that frequent breastfeeding in the early weeks establishes a good milk supply and provides the best nutrition for your baby as well as comfort and security. Enjoy this precious and memorable time with your baby.

Cons of Pacifier Use:

- ♥ Pacifiers may lead to a shorter time of exclusive breastfeeding and early weaning.
- ♥ Frequent use may reduce mother's milk supply and slow infant growth due to decreased breast stimulation with shorter and fewer feedings.
- ♥ In the early weeks of breastfeeding, pacifier use may contribute to latch difficulties or ineffective sucking at the breast.
- ♥ Increases the risk for ear infections, thrush in baby's mouth and possible future dental problems.
- ♥ Homemade pacifiers or any that are used improperly are associated with increased risk for choking or suffocation.
- ♥ Some babies may be allergic to latex pacifiers. Parents may consider using BPA-free silicone pacifiers instead.
- ♥ Babies may become dependent on pacifiers with frequent use, which may lead to difficulties weaning from them.

Other Ways to Comfort & Soothe Your Baby:

- ♥ Feed your baby at the earliest signs of hunger such as rooting, sucking on hands, moving arms or legs, or making soft cooing or signing sounds. These early feeding cues may occur a half hour before baby cries due to hunger.
- ♥ Hold or wear your baby in a front carrier.
- ♥ Provide lots of touching, massaging, or gently patting or rubbing your baby's back.
- ♥ Comfort your baby by singing lullabies, humming, rocking, gently swaying or dancing with baby.
- ♥ Fussy babies may need extra snuggling, holding or swaddling.
- ♥ Play recordings of white noise, heartbeats, womb sounds or soothing music.
- ♥ Going for walks, car rides, or taking a warm bath together with your baby can all help as soothing and calming techniques.

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References available on website

For informational purposes only. This handout does not replace medical advice.

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