

There are a variety of opinions on pacifier use. It's very difficult, with newborns, to say that there's one rule that works for everyone. Opinions vary from the belief is that pacifiers may cover up feeding cues in the first few crucial days of learning or that pacifiers make it harder for some babies to discern that they need to suckle not just to self-soothe, but also to get food. Some studies show that pacifier use reduces the risk of SIDS. (See "The Changing Concept of Sudden infant Death Syndrome," at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) for more information.)

*Tips for successful breastfeeding and pacifier use:*

- ✓ From a breastfeeding perspective, it is important to ensure a pacifier is not used to reduce breast stimulation. Therefore, pacifiers should not be used regularly to delay or reduce a baby's access to his or her mother's breasts.
- ✓ If the pacifier is used when putting the baby to sleep, it should not be reinserted once the baby falls asleep. If the baby refuses the pacifier, he or she should not be forced to take it.
- ✓ Pacifiers should not be coated in anything sweet.
- ✓ Pacifiers should be cleaned often and replaced regularly.
- ✓ Never substitute a pacifier for a feeding at the breast or try to hold the baby off longer between feedings with one.
- ✓ There are studies that indicate that babies who take a pacifier tend to wean earlier than those who do not. This is most likely because as a baby gets older – once he's established on solid food – it is often his desire to suck that ensures he continues to seek out the breast often. Babies who use pacifiers are getting that need to suck met with something other than the breast, and therefore may decide to give up breastfeeding sooner than if they did not take a pacifier.
- ✓ Some babies who take pacifiers are more prone to oral yeast (thrush) which can be transferred to mom's nipples.
- ✓ Follow all safety guidelines for the use of pacifiers. They should never be tied around the baby's neck. If the pacifier is cracked or broken, replace immediately.
- ✓ Prolonged pacifier use can result in teeth misalignment, and can also occasionally lead to shaping of the soft palate or speech problems.
- ✓ Giving baby a pacifier will increase mom's chances of ovulating and getting pregnant. Exclusive breastfeeding, depending upon your breastfeeding frequency and other factors, is a method of birth control that can be more than 98% effective during the first 6 months and 94% effective during the second six months. Ensuring that all of baby's sucking needs are met at the breast increases the effectiveness of this method of contraception.

*When to avoid the pacifier:*

If you observe any of the following problems, it would be a good idea to discontinue pacifier use, at least until the problem is resolved:

- Pacifier use reduces your baby's frequency or duration of feeds (newborns should be nursing at least 8 to 12 times a day).
- Baby is having difficulties nursing well.
- Baby is having problems with weight gain (in which case baby needs to nurse as often as possible).
- Mom is having milk supply problems (in which case she needs to put baby to breast, not pacifier, at every opportunity in order to increase milk supply).
- Mom and/or baby have thrush, particularly if it's hard to get rid of or repeated.
- Baby is having repeated ear infections (an increased incidence of ear infections has been linked to pacifier use).

*In conclusion...*

As long as you keep the above in mind and use the pacifier sparingly, it is up to you whether and when you wish to comfort baby yourself or with a pacifier.