

Breastfeeding and Pacifier Use

Wait to use a pacifier about 1 month with a breastfed baby

These guidelines follow the recommendation of The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, the International Lactation Consultant Association, the United States Breastfeeding Committee, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- Babies learn to suck effectively for breastfeeding when no artificial nipples are used in the early weeks. Pacifier use may cause baby to suck differently for breastfeeding.
- Your baby's frequent nursing at the breast is key to your milk supply. Offering a pacifier often reduces the amount of time your baby stimulates your breasts to produce milk. Your baby's growth can be slowed due to shorter and fewer feedings.

When to use a pacifier if you are breastfeeding

- During painful procedures, although if able to breastfeed during procedures that is best.
- Premature and ill 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 at the breast.
- As an occasional substitute for babies' sucking needs when mother and baby are not together, after about 1 month.
- During sleep to reduce risk of SIDS after breastfeeding is well established, at about 1 month.

Concerns

- Pacifiers may lead to a shorter time of exclusive breastfeeding and early weaning.
- Their use increases the risk for ear infections, thrush in baby's mouth, and possible future dental problems.
- Babies may become dependent on pacifiers, which can lead to problems weaning from them.

Guidelines for use

If you decide to use a pacifier when your baby is 1 month or older, follow these guidelines:

- Offer it only when you are certain your baby is not hungry.
- Never force your baby to take a pacifier. Not all babies want the extra sucking.

Some babies may be allergic to latex pacifiers. You may want to use BPA-free silicone pacifiers instead.

To prevent choking

- Never tie a pacifier to anything such as a crib or around your baby's hand.
- Do not use a nipple from a bottle or a homemade pacifier.
- Buy a pacifier that is 1 piece and at least 1½ inches across.

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To soothe and comfort your baby

- Feed your baby at the earliest signs of hunger such as:
 - rooting
 - sucking on hands
 - moving arms or legs
 - making soft cooing or sighing sounds

These early feeding cues may occur a half hour before baby cries due to hunger.

- Swaddle, snuggle, and hold your baby.
- Gently pat or rub your baby's back.
- Sing or hum while gently rocking, swaying, or dancing with your baby.
- Play soothing music or recordings of white noise, heartbeats or womb sounds.
- Go for walks or car rides.

Talk with your lactation consultant or health care provider about pacifier use if you have questions.