

Pacifier Use For The Breastfed Baby

Does My Baby Need A Pacifier?

Many new parents wonder if their baby needs a pacifier. There are important points to consider when making the decision of whether to use a pacifier.

Babies Need To Suck At The Breast

Babies are born with a natural need to suck, this starts before baby is even born. Many ultrasound photos show baby sucking a thumb! This instinctive behavior helps ensure that baby sucks frequently at mom's breast. When baby sucks at the breast often he is sure to get enough breastmilk, which helps to ensure good weight gain and growth. When a pacifier is used instead of allowing baby suck at the breast, baby may not take in as much breastmilk as he otherwise would.

What Are The Risks of Pacifier Use?

There have been studies showing that babies who are given a pacifier in the early weeks of life may stop breastfeeding sooner than those who do not.

Prolonged use of a pacifier may lead to dental issues and misalignment of teeth.

Pacifier use increases the chances of baby developing thrush, a fungal infection, of the mouth. This could lead to problems for both baby and mom if the baby's infection spreads to mom's nipples. Remember that the pacifier needs to be cleaned often to prevent the spread of germs and fungus.

What If I Choose To Give My Baby A Pacifier?

Ideally, wait to give your baby a pacifier until he is 4-6 weeks old. This will ensure that breastfeeding has been well established first and giving a pacifier will be less likely cause problems.

Do not use a pacifier to replace a feeding at the breast. Babies need to eat when they are hungry. Using a pacifier to prolong time between feedings can lead to missed feedings and poor weight gain in baby.

Follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics or your pediatrician when selecting and giving a pacifier to your baby. See www.aap.org for more information.



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