



Are Pacifiers a Problem for Your Breastfed Baby?

Long thought to be a help for crying babies and frazzled parents, there are some new insights into the use of pacifiers. The innocuous pacifier, or “soother” as it is called in some countries, may affect initiation of breastfeeding as well as duration of breastfeeding.

Shorter Duration of Breastfeeding

Several researchers have found pacifier use in the newborn period reduces the frequency of breastfeeding which may result in lower breastmilk supply, slow weight gain, early weaning and the development of improper sucking technique when the baby is at the breast. The earlier pacifier use is started and the more often it is used, the more likely difficulties will result.

Sucking to Reduce Pain

Sucking has been shown to reduce pain during painful procedures, either breastfeeding, sucking on a parent’s finger or using a pacifier.

Pacifier Use and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

The use of a pacifier has been associated with reduction in the incidence of SIDs, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended the use of pacifier while going to sleep. In order to minimize the negative effect on breastfeeding, it is recommended that infants go to sleep with a pacifier after breastfeeding/chestfeeding is well established, at around 3 to 4 weeks of age.

The risk of SIDs is highest in the 2nd and 3rd months of life. The use of a pacifier while going to sleep is recommended then. When the infant is asleep and the pacifier falls from the baby’s mouth, it does not need to be replaced.

Considerations for Pacifier Use

- Choose a pacifier that has a mouth guard wider than the infant’s mouth and has vent holes.
- Choose silicone to avoid development of a latex allergy.
- Do not tie pacifier around infant’s neck, wrist or crib rung.
- Do not dip in sugar or honey.
- Clean daily with soap and water.
- Discontinue use as soon infant no longer needs it.

References

- Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine. Protocol #5 Peripartum Breastfeeding Management for the Healthy Mother and Infant at Term. <https://abm.memberclicks.net/assets/DOCUMENTS/PROTOCOLS/5-peripartum-bf-management-protocol-english.pdf>
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