



Can pacifiers be a help for your preterm baby while in the hospital? Research shows they can help physical development as well as provide soothing, comfort and stress reduction. Talking to your baby while they are using a pacifier can be especially helpful.

## Vital Signs

Pacifiers have been shown to help stabilize a preterm infant's heart rate and breathing patterns, and to help increase blood oxygen levels.

## Sucking to Reduce Pain

Sucking (either breastfeeding, sucking on a parent's finger, or using a pacifier) has been shown to reduce pain during painful procedures. A sweet solution, such as a pacifier dipped in breastmilk or a sucrose solution, seems to enhance this effect.

## Sucking Development

Some preterm infants need sucking practice to develop mature suck, swallow, and breathing patterns. Practice sucking on a pacifier use can assist with this. A pacifier can be used during a tube feeding so your baby associates a full tummy with sucking which can hasten the transition to oral feedings. Playing a pacifier "tug-of-war" game with your baby can help increase oral muscle strength.

## References

Lubbe W, Ten Ham-Baloyi W. When is the use of pacifiers justifiable in the baby-friendly hospital initiative context? A clinician's guide. *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth*. 2017 Apr 27;17(1):130.

Spencer, B., Campbell, S. H., Chamberlain, K., & Approval Review Committee. (2022). Core curriculum for interdisciplinary lactation care. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Lawrence, R. A., & Lawrence, R. M. (2021). *Breastfeeding: a guide for the medical professional*. Elsevier Health Sciences.

## Considerations for Pacifier Use at Home

- Choose a pacifier that is a single piece and is not a potential choking hazard due to breakage or small parts.
- 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.

## 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. 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 mouth, it does not need to be replaced.