

Feeding Cues and Pacifiers



When the newborn roots, sucks on his/or her hands or fists and/or fusses, the baby is exhibiting feeding cues and needs to be fed. When the baby receives a pacifier rather than nursing during the first few weeks, he/she does not receive the calories needed to regain the weight lost after birth. The newborn needs food to help the baby begin to produce stool frequently, which decreases his/her chance of developing jaundice, a yellowing of the skin and eyes.

Babies do not need a pacifier to learn how to suck. Research has shown that breastfed infants who use a pacifier in the first month of life breastfeed for a shorter period of time. The use of a pacifier has also been associated with a lower milk supply, and engorgement and sore nipples are more common if the infant uses a pacifier in the early weeks of life.

Infants who routinely use a pacifier have more infections, such as ear infections, wheezing, diarrhea, colic, and vomiting. They are also more likely to develop oral thrush, a condition in which the fungus *Candida Albicans* builds up in their mouths, and cavities in their teeth.

Prolonged use of pacifiers is associated with delayed onset of speech and increases the chance of the child requiring braces due to the pressure of the pacifier against the roof of the mouth and front teeth.

In 2005, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended the use of pacifiers to help infants fall asleep because it was thought to decrease the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Specifically they stated:

“The pacifier should be used when placing the infant down for sleep and not be reinserted once the infant falls asleep. If the infant refuses the pacifier, he or she should not be forced to take it.

Pacifiers should not be coated in any sweet solution.

Pacifiers should be cleaned often and replaced regularly.

For breastfed infants, delay pacifier introduction until one month of age to ensure that breastfeeding is firmly established.”

If you choose to use a pacifier when you are “nursed out,” then hold your baby close to you while you give it to him/her for a short period of time rather than simply using it to get him/her to sleep while he/she is in a crib or bassinet. Be careful not to rely on a pacifier to keep your baby from expressing himself/herself.