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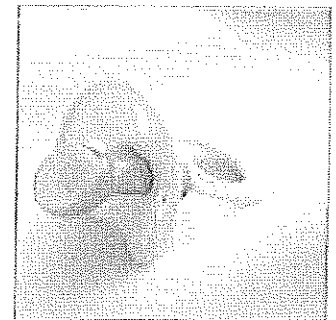
## Ages & Stages



### Pacifiers: Satisfying Your Baby's Needs

Many babies soothe themselves by sucking. If your baby wants to suck beyond nursing or bottle-feeding, a pacifier can satisfy that need.

A pacifier is meant to satisfy your baby's noneating sucking needs, not to replace or delay meals. So offer a pacifier to your baby only after or between feedings, when you are sure she is not hungry. If she is hungry, and you offer a pacifier as a substitute, she may become so angry that it interferes with feeding or she may not get enough to eat. Remember, the pacifier is for your baby's benefit, not your convenience, so let her decide whether and when to use it.



Still, offering a pacifier when your baby is going to sleep may help reduce the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome), although doctors do not know the reason for this. If you are breastfeeding, wait until your baby is one month old before using a pacifier. However, if your baby doesn't want it or if it falls out of her mouth, don't force it because it may interfere with breastfeeding.

If your baby does use a pacifier to fall asleep, she may wake up when it falls out of her mouth. When she's younger, she may cry for you to put it back for her. Babies who suck their fingers or hands have a real advantage here, because their hands are always readily available. Once your baby is older and has the hand coordination to find and replace it, there should be no problem.

When shopping for a pacifier, look for a one-piece model that has a soft nipple. (Some models can break into two pieces and become a choking hazard.) It should be dishwasher-safe so you can either boil it or run it through the dishwasher before your baby uses it. Until she's six months old, you should clean the pacifier this way frequently, so she's not exposed to any increased risk of infection, as her immune system is still maturing. After that, the likelihood of her picking up an infection in that way is minimal, so you can just wash it with soap and rinse it in clear water.

Pacifiers are available in a variety of shapes and sizes. Once you decide which your baby prefers, buy some extras. Pacifiers have a way of disappearing or falling on the floor or street when you need them most. However, never try to solve this problem by fastening the pacifier with a cord around your baby's neck. Babies can choke or strangle on the cords, strings, ribbons, and fasteners attached to pacifiers, whether or not they go around the child's neck. Also, for safety reasons, it's never a good idea to make pacifiers out of a bottle nipple. Babies have pulled the nipple out of such homemade pacifiers and choked on them. Babies also can choke on a pacifier that's not the right size for their age, so be sure to follow the recommended age range for each pacifier.

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**Source [Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 \(Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)**

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