



ORAL HEALTH KANSAS

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Tips and Tricks: Pacifier Use

Thumb or pacifier? Which is best for baby? Experts prefer pacifiers over thumb or finger sucking because a pacifier is less likely to cause physical problems and the habit is easier to break than thumbsucking.



Potential benefits

- Distraction in times of stress such as during shots
- Reduced risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and reflux
- Helps some children get to sleep
- Helps distinguish between a hungry and a fussy baby



Use and potential health issues

- Sharing pacifiers can pass bacteria that cause cavities and other infections
- Avoid dipping the pacifier in sweet foods like honey or jam which increases risk for cavities
- Never tie a pacifier to a baby's wrist, neck or crib. The string can tangle around baby's neck, causing choking.
- Check pacifiers for wear. Pacifiers can weaken and come apart, causing a choking hazard.
- Wash a pacifier with soap and water, never your mouth. This can pass bacteria to the baby that can cause tooth decay.
- Prolonged pacifier use can cause developmental delays in swallowing and speech



Tips to wean from a pacifier

- Limit pacifier uses to certain times (such as naptime or bedtime) or certain places such as in bed
- Child puts pacifier under pillow for the tooth fairy to trade for small gift
- Encourage child to throw pacifier away because they are no longer a baby
- Poke 2-3 holes in the pacifier with a clean pin, altering the pacifier so it is no longer satisfying to suck on
- For more ideas, look for our Tips & Tricks on "Kicking the Habit"