

Using a pacifier with your baby

How can using a pacifier help my baby?

A pacifier can help:

- Maintain oral skills.
- Promote oromotor development.
- Soothe or comfort your baby.

Sometimes, your baby may not be allowed to drink. This may be because it is not safe for them to drink. Their doctor may advise that you keep using a pacifier to maintain your baby's oral skills. It can also help make the change back to breast or bottle-feeding easier for you and your baby.

What type of pacifier is best?

Pick a pacifier shape that closely matches the bottle nipple you want to use. You can choose a pacifier that your baby prefers and is able to hold in their mouth.

How often do I offer the pacifier to my baby?

Offer a pacifier to help comfort your baby anytime they cry or show signs of hunger.

- Do not force your baby to take the pacifier. This can result in oral aversion (your baby not wanting to take anything in their mouth).
- Use a pacifier if it does not cause stress. Signs of stress may include:
 - Gagging.
 - Making a facial grimace.
 - Turning their head away.

If your baby does not eat by mouth (by swallowing) and is on a bolus tube feeding schedule:

- Pick up your baby. Hold them during the feeding.
- Give your baby the pacifier during their feeding.
 - This will help your baby learn the routine of being held while sucking on the pacifier.
 - It will also help them learn the feeling of fullness from the feeding.
- You may also offer the pacifier outside of bolus feeds if your baby is awake and interested.

If your baby does not eat by mouth (by swallowing) and is on a continuous tube feeding schedule:

- Pick up your baby. Hold them often.
- Offer the pacifier when your baby is awake and interested.
- Give your baby the pacifier multiple times a day.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Using a pacifier with your baby, continued

Can I dip the pacifier in liquid for flavor?

If your baby's doctor allows it, you may dip the pacifier in formula or expressed human milk.

- Dip the pacifier in your baby's formula or human milk. Using the formula or human milk that your baby will drink one day will help them make the switch easier when that time comes.
- Shake off the extra formula or human milk before giving the pacifier to your baby.
- Do not dip it in other kinds of drinks, such as cow's milk, sugar water, soda, fruit drinks, coffee or tea.

What if my baby refuses the pacifier?

Sometimes, a baby will gag, make a facial grimace or turn away when they do not want the pacifier.

When this happens:

- Do not force the pacifier.
- Offer the pacifier at another time or bring their fist or fingers up to their mouth to help them self-soothe. They may begin to suck on their hand.

If your baby gags every time you give them the pacifier, you may need to see a feeding specialist. Talk with your baby's doctor if this happens.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.