

## Information for breastfeeding families



# *Are Pacifiers a Problem for the Breastfed Baby?*

Mothers often ask about whether it is OK to use a pacifier. Some want to use them to calm their baby, others are afraid to. What are the issues to consider?

### **Shorter Duration of Breastfeeding**

Long thought to be a help for crying babies and frazzled parents, there are some new insights into the use of pacifiers for breastfeeding babies. The innocuous pacifier, or "soother" as it is called in some countries, may affect initiation of breastfeeding as well as duration of breastfeeding.

In a study by Righard and Alade it was found that the use of a pacifier before 2 weeks of age resulted in superficial and ineffective suckling technique in many infants. These infants were more likely to have breastfeeding problems. Their "findings suggest that the prerequisite of an uncomplicated and uninterrupted breastfeeding period is a correct sucking technique from the outset, and that excessive use of pacifiers and the early introduction of occasional bottles should be avoided." They also found a shorter duration of breastfeeding in the group who used pacifiers.

Victoria et al found in surveying 354 mothers that there was a threefold risk of early weaning from the breast in breastfeeding infants who used a pacifier. They speculate that either less breast stimulation may result in lowered breastmilk production or that pacifier use may be a marker for breastfeeding difficulties, or that mothers use it to initiate early weaning.

### **The Cholecystokinin Link**

The hormone, cholecystokinin, is released in the infant's gut in response to suckling. This release comes in two waves: the first, about 10 minutes into the feeding, is thought to be initiated by suckling stimulation to the vagal nerve and the second, about 30 minutes into the feeding, is stimulated by the presence of milk (fat) in the gut.

Cholecystokinin causes satiety, sedation and sleepiness. This response happens when the infant is feeding at the breast and can happen while sucking on a pacifier. Parents should be cautioned about the over-use of pacifiers resulting in missed feedings and failure to gain weight.

### **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. In order to minimize the negative effect on breastfeeding, it is recommended not to use a pacifier until breastfeeding is well established (the first few weeks). The risk of SIDs is highest in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 his mouth, it does not need to be replaced.

## REFERENCES:

American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The changing concept of sudden infant death syndrome: diagnostic coding shifts, controversies regarding the sleeping environment, and new variables to consider in reducing risk. *Pediatrics*. 2005 Nov;116(5):1245-55.

Feldens CA, Ardenghi TM, Cruz LN, Cunha Scalco GP, Vítolo MR. Advising mothers about breastfeeding and weaning reduced pacifier use in the first year of life: a randomized trial. *Community Dent Oral Epidemiol*. 2012 Dec 13. doi: 10.1111/cdoe.12030.

Jaafar SH, Jahanfar S, Angolkar M, Ho JJ. Effect of restricted pacifier use in breastfeeding term infants for increasing duration of breastfeeding. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2012 Jul 11;7:CD007202

Kronborg H, Vaeth M. How are effective breastfeeding technique and pacifier use related to breastfeeding problems and breastfeeding duration? *Birth*. 2009 Mar;36(1):34-42.

Marchini G, Lindén A. Cholecystokinin, a satiety signal in newborn infants? *J Dev Physiol*. 1992 May;17(5):215-9.

Moon RY, Fu L. Sudden infant death syndrome: an update. *Pediatr Rev*. 2012 Jul;33(7):314-20. doi: 10.1542/pir.33-7-314.

Nickel NC, Labbok MH, Hudgens MG, Daniels JL. The extent that noncompliance with the ten steps to successful breastfeeding influences breastfeeding duration. *J Hum Lact*. 2013 Feb;29(1):59-70.

Righard, L., & Alade, M. (1992). Sucking Technique and Its Effect on Success of Breastfeeding. *Birth* 19:4, 185-189.

Victoria, C., et al. (1993). Use of Pacifiers and Breastfeeding Duration. *The Lancet* 341, 404-406.

Uvnaas-Moberg, K., Marchini, G., Winberg, J. Plasma cholecystokinin concentrations after breastfeeding in healthy 4 day old infants. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. 1993 68: 46-48.