

Sucking is infants' chief pleasure and may not be satisfied by breastfeeding or bottle feeding. It is such a strong need that infants who are deprived of sucking, such as those with a cleft lip repair, suck on their tongues. Some newborns are born with sucking blisters on their hands from in utero sucking activity.

Problems arise when parents are overly concerned about the sucking of the fingers, thumb, or pacifier and attempt to restrain this natural tendency. Before giving advice, nurses should investigate the parents' feelings and base guidance on this information.

Pacifier use, particularly in the early days after birth and in the birth hospital, has gained considerable attention in the scientific literature. [Nelson \(2012\)](#) suggests that it cannot be stated with absolute certainty that pacifier use is bad in every situation. Health care workers must be informed on potential harm and benefits in pacifier use and provide parents with the highest level of evidence in order to make an informed decision on usage. Researchers and breastfeeding experts recommend that pacifiers are not introduced to breastfed infants unless medically necessary ([Lawrence and Lawrence, 2011](#)) (see [Research Focus](#) box).

## Research Focus

### Pacifier Use and Breastfeeding

A recent systematic review found mixed results of pacifier use and breastfeeding outcomes ([Nelson, 2012](#)). The association of pacifier use and decreased breastfeeding duration was only found in observational studies, while no effect of pacifier use on breastfeeding duration was noted in randomized control trials ([Nelson, 2012](#)). They further concluded that the greatest impact on pacifier use and breastfeeding occurred early in the infant's life when learning effective sucking and stimulating the mother's milk.

Pacifier use has been associated with an increased risk of otitis media in several studies ([Salah, Abdel-Aziz, Al-Farok, et al, 2013](#)). Because of this, the American Academy of Pediatrics Subcommittee on the Management of Acute Otitis Media recommended that parents reduce pacifier usage in the second 6 months of life