



Standard 2: Pacify or comfort your baby at the breast

Babies have a physiological need to suck. They often even suck their fingers and thumbs in the womb. Artificial pacifiers were designed to satisfy a baby's sucking needs and to make mothers' lives easier. However, nature has a better way. By pacifying your baby often at your breast, you help stimulate a good milk supply and increase the amount of time of closeness and love between you and your baby. This extra stimulation from comforting your baby at your breast is one main difference between exclusive breastfeeding and ecological breastfeeding. You can exclusively breastfeed yet use pacifiers or other soothers and only nurse your baby when he is hungry - not for comfort. However, ecological breastfeeding includes nursing for comfort and pacification and often leads to several months or years of natural infertility.

Many babies love the comfort of nursing to sleep, and many older babies nurse to be close to mom. Toddlers who get hurt or who feel overwhelmed often nurse to feel right with the world again. It is such an easy way to help a child feel better! Nursing during or just after immunizations or other medical procedures can reduce your child's pain. The hormones that calm a baby also calm you, too, so it is a win-win situation.

Some moms wonder if it is really possible not to use pacifiers at all. I, personally, have never used pacifiers with any of my babies. My babies do enjoy nursing often, but even with several older children for whom to care, I still have a few moments to sit down and nurse my youngest. Part of this very book was written while nursing a baby!

Research has shown that by avoiding pacifiers and artificial teats, your baby's jaw has a better chance of developing correctly which translates into less risk of needing orthodontic work in the future. Breastfeeding without pacifiers also reduces thumbsucking, leads to better speech, and contributes to a longer duration of breastfeeding (*The Seven Standards of Ecological Breastfeeding*, p. 10).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends pacifier use at night (after breastfeeding is well established) to reduce the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). However, Dr. James McKenna and Dr. William Sears among others have concluded that safe bedsharing and breastfeeding are excellent ways to reduce SIDS risk without needing to introduce a pacifier. After all, an artificial pacifier is just replacing the non-nutritive suckling that naturally would occur at the breast (*The Baby Book, Revised and Updated Edition 2013*, p.120, 122).