

Responsible soother use

Sucking is a core physiological need, as instinctive as breastfeeding, that starts in the foetus during pregnancy. Tongue movement and sucking have been observed from 13 weeks of gestation.^{1,2} Non-nutritive sucking at the breast is a natural reflex and helps to calm a baby.³ If mum and baby are separated, non-nutritive sucking on a soother can help.

What are the benefits of non-nutritive sucking?

Helps calm babies³

Reduces perception of pain⁴

Helps with digestion*⁵


Supports oral development*^{6,7}

*shown in preterm infants

Scientific evidence shows that soothers are not detrimental to the initiation and duration of breastfeeding in healthy term infants.⁸ According to the latest (2018) WHO/UNICEF 10 steps to successful breastfeeding, Baby-friendly hospitals should counsel mothers on the use and risks of feeding bottles, teats and soothers.⁹




Using a soother responsibly


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Calming & relaxing

For babies who are unable to be with their mum to provide comfort and sucking on the breast, a soother can be used to support calming their emotions³, as well as reducing how they experience pain.⁴




Recognising feeding cues


Breastfeeds should not be delayed or replaced by using a soother. The soother should only be offered when the baby is not hungry. Missing or delaying a breastfeed can lead to engorged breasts, increased risk of mastitis and/or a reduced milk supply.¹²
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Soothers for sleeping

Babies who breastfeed are at reduced risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).¹⁰ Researchers have also reported that babies using soothers at sleep time have a decreased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).¹⁰ The way in which a soother can reduce the risk of SIDS is still unclear.




Breastfeeding challenges


If a baby is having problems breastfeeding, it is helpful to delay the use of a soother until breastfeeding is firmly established. Parents should always seek professional breastfeeding support.
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Pain management

During painful procedures, such as immunisations, the breast should be the first option to help reduce a baby's feeling of pain.¹¹ When this is not possible, using a soother can also help with pain management.⁴



Oral health

An ideal soother shape should have a thin neck and a flat teat allowing the tongue more free movement.¹³ Limiting soother use to 6 hours per day¹⁴ and early weaning from a soother can help to prevent misaligned teeth.¹⁵ Weaning a baby from a soother can begin as early as 6 months. At the latest, weaning should start by three years of age.³
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Replace after illness

All soothers should be discarded after a baby has had any infectious disease such as a cold or stomach flu.

For more information on breastfeeding and milk supply, visit [medela.com/breastfeeding](https://www.medela.com/breastfeeding)

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