

Pacifiers and nipple shells and shields

Frequently asked questions

Q. How does pacifier use affect the breastfeeding process?

A. Pacifier use is best avoided in the initiation phase and used only after breastfeeding is well established. In some instances, early pacifier use can interfere with the establishment of good breastfeeding practices or may indicate the presence of a breastfeeding problem that requires intervention.

Q. Is it true that pacifier use prevents sudden infant death?

A. There appears to be a significant reduction in SIDs with pacifier use. Research from the US recommends that pacifiers be offered to babies at sleep times up to one year of age to reduce the risk of SIDs. Breastfed babies should only be offered pacifiers when breastfeeding is well established. (1)

Q. Does it matter what type of breast pad a mother uses?

A. Breast pads should not contain plastic backing as this encourages a moist environment and may prevent healing of sore nipples.

Q. When should a mother use a nipple shield during breastfeeding?

A. Nipple shields should be avoided during breastfeeding. Mothers are often advised to use them if they have sore or cracked nipples. Nipple shields make it more difficult for the baby to attach to the breast correctly and can exacerbate nipple trauma. Nipple shields also lower milk intake by reducing milk transfer and inhibiting effective breast emptying. (For effective management of nipple pain see Fact sheet 5)



Q. How effective are nipple shells, when used in the antenatal period to treat flat or inverted nipples?

A. Nipple shells have not been shown to be of any benefit when used ante-natally for the treatment of flat or inverted nipples.

References

1. Haulk et al. Do pacifiers reduce the risk of SIDs? Paediatrics 116(5): e716-23 2005 November