

A Guide to PACIFIERS and SLEEP

A sleep prop is anything that a baby is dependent on to fall asleep. A pacifier can be a sleep prop. It can either be a **parent-controlled** or a **child-controlled** prop. Most sleep issues that are due to the pacifier happen because it is a parent-controlled prop, requiring the parent to replace it as often as needed.

Parent-controlled

When your baby is dependent on YOU to give him the pacifier, it can cause:

- trouble falling asleep
- short naps
- frequent night wakings
- early mornings

Child-controlled

In order for the pacifier to be fully child-controlled, baby needs to be able to find *and* insert it on his own. This isn't developmentally possible until baby is at least 7-8 months.



Should we use one?

Pros

- may help reduce SIDS
- helpful for soothing, day and night
- easier to take away later, than fingers

*If your child doesn't use it much during the day, it may be easiest to just get rid of it sooner rather than later.

Cons

- possible nipple confusion early on (highly debated)
- can cause sleep issues
- even once child-controlled, still may need parent involvement if lost
- needs to eventually be taken away

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Help Removing Parent Control

If your child is old enough to control it himself, but doesn't yet, follow these tips to help it become fully child-controlled:

- Offer it once at the beginning of nap or bed time, but do NOT replace it after that. If you've done sleep training, you can revisit that until he learns to control the pacifier himself. If you haven't, now would be a good time to do so, if you choose, to teach him independent sleep.
- If he hasn't mastered it yet, let him play with the pacifier during the day. Instead of putting it in his mouth for him, hand it to him and then guide his hand to insert it into his mouth.
- Place multiple pacifiers in the crib to increase his chances of finding one himself.

Getting Rid of the Pacifier

If your child is under 2 years, then the easiest way is to just stop giving it to him and throw them all away (so you won't be tempted to give in). There will be an adjustment period, but things should return to normal after a few days.

*Most pediatric dentists recommend getting rid of pacifiers by the child's 3rd birthday.

If your child is over 2 years, then he may be able to understand an exchange. Try one of the following:

- let him use his pacifiers as tender to purchase a new toy.
- have the Pacifier Fairy leave a gift in exchange for his pacifiers.
- mail his pacifiers to his favorite fictional place for the babies there (ex. For a Frozen fan, send them to Arendale.)

