

# Soothers

## Cape Breton Regional Hospital



- Always follow your baby's feeding cues, like:
  - › opening their mouth and/or moving their mouth more, licking.
  - › bringing their hands to their mouth and/or sucking on their hands.
  - › rooting (turning their head towards you or your breasts). This reflex can be triggered by gently touching the corner of your baby's mouth.
- **Do not dip a soother in anything sweet.** This can lead to tooth decay. Using honey can cause food poisoning (botulism).
- **Soothers should be replaced every 2 months.** Using a damaged soother can cause choking and death.
- **Do not let your baby or child chew on a soother.** It could become damaged and cause choking and death.
- **Do not tie anything around your baby's neck.** This can cause strangulation (trouble breathing) and death.
- **Do not make your own soother out of bottle nipples, caps, or other materials.** This can cause choking and death.

### How to care for your baby's soother

- Sterilize (clean) the soother by boiling it in water for 2 minutes before using it for the first time. **Let it cool completely before giving it to your baby.** After each use, or if it is dropped on the ground or floor, wash it with hot, soapy water.
- Always make sure the soother is not damaged or cracked before giving it to your baby. Throw it out if it is damaged.

### For more information or support:

Cape Breton Regional Hospital  
Perinatal Clinic

- › Phone: 902-567-7840

*Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.*

*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*  
[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

*Prepared by: Cape Breton Regional Hospital Baby Friendly Initiative  
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*

The information in this pamphlet is for informational and educational purposes only. The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

WP85-2289 © May 2022 Nova Scotia Health Authority  
The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

Studies suggest that using a soother (also called a pacifier) during the first year of a baby's life lowers the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

If your baby seems to want to suck between feedings, a soother can help. **A soother should never be used instead of feeding or without the comfort and cuddling of a parent.**

For babies born preterm or who are not well, it is important to talk to your health care provider or lactation consultant about how and when to use a soother.

For the health, growth, and development of your baby, breastfeeding is recommended for the first 6 months. Then, safe, solid foods with breastfeeding can be added, up to 2 years or longer.

### **Soothers can interfere with breastfeeding**

- Using a soother causes your baby to suck at the breast less, which can lower your milk supply. The more your baby breastfeeds, the more milk your body will make.
- If a soother is used when your baby is hungry, they may not get enough of the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development.

- If a soother is used too often, your baby may start to prefer the soother and refuse to breastfeed.

**If using a soother interferes with exclusive (fed breast milk only) breastfeeding, it can make the lactation amenorrhea method (LAM) of contraception not work. Talk to your primary health care provider about this, and if LAM is right for you.**

### **Other risks**

- If a soother is not cleaned properly, it can carry germs that can make your baby sick.
- An old or worn-out soother can lose pieces or fall apart while your baby is using it. This can cause your baby to choke.
- Using a soother can cause a higher risk of ear infections and dental problems.
- It may also cause your baby's mouth muscles to not work properly.

### **Before offering your baby a soother:**

- Try to breastfeed first.
- Hold your baby (all ages) skin-to-skin against your chest.
- Watch for cues (signs) they are hungry or tired. Offer them the breast or put them down for a nap.
- Check to see if they are too warm or cold.
- Hold, carry, or walk with them.
- Offer a clean finger for them to suck.
- Check to see if they need a diaper change.

### **If you decide to use a soother:**

- Wait until your baby is breastfeeding well and your milk supply is established (around 4 to 6 weeks) before offering a soother. If you would like to use a soother sooner, talk to your primary health care provider.
- Always make sure your baby is not hungry, tired, or cold before giving them a soother.
- Avoid using a soother to delay your baby's feedings.