

[IMAGE]

Pacifiers May Increase Ear Infection Risk

It's estimated that 75-85% of children in Western countries habitually use a pacifier during infancy and early childhood. Although pacifier use has long been considered a relatively harmless habit, recent evidence points to increased risks of oral/dental problems and recurrent ear infections (acute otitis media, or AOM).

A study in *Pediatrics* examined pacifier use as a potential contributor to AOM by pairing 14 well-baby clinics in Finland, with one clinic in each pair designated for intervention and the other clinic serving as the control. At intervention clinics, parents were instructed to limit their children's pacifier use during visits to the clinic; at control clinics, no such recommendation was offered.

Results showed that in 272 children at the intervention clinics, pacifier use decreased by 21% and the incidence of AOM decreased by 29% compared with children (212) at control clinics. Overall, children who did not use a pacifier continuously suffered 33% fewer episodes of AOM than children who did use a pacifier, leading the authors to suggest limiting pacifier use to "moments when the child is falling asleep."

Reference:

Niemela M, Pihkari O, Pokka T, et al. Pacifier as a risk factor for acute otitis media: a randomized, controlled trial of parental counseling. *Pediatrics*, Sept. 2000: Vol. 106, No. 3, pp483-88.

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