

# ARE PACIFIERS BAD FOR BABIES' TEETH?

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Parents often have questions about pacifiers, especially about the right time to stop giving them to their babies. Pacifiers can get a bad rap, and parents sometimes feel guilty that their children "are still using a binky." Pacifiers are not bad and can be extremely useful to help soothe upset children, as any parent who has flown on a plane with a young child can attest. **Like most things in life, pacifiers are best used in moderation. Studies show that quitting the pacifier habit before age 3 will greatly reduce any long term negative effects to the teeth.** Excessive or prolonged pacifier use can cause changes to your child's bite, some of which are reversible, others of which can be irreversible. The key to reducing or eliminating these dental changes is reducing the **intensity, frequency, and/or duration** of the pacifier habit. Intensity is difficult to address because your child will not likely respond to "Hey, sweetie, suck a little softer." However, you can definitely control the frequency and duration that your child is using their pacifier. During your dental visit, a pediatric dentist that is well-trained will evaluate your child's bite to determine if there are any

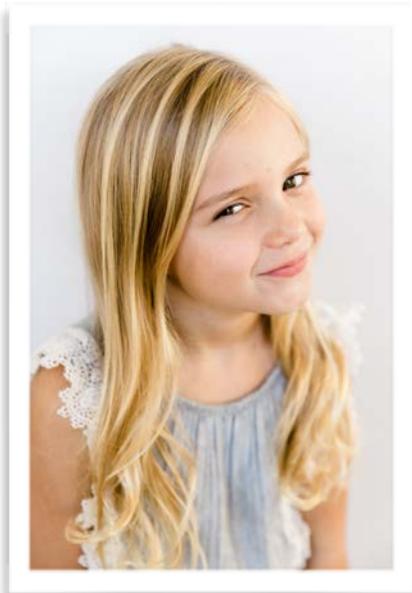


changes to your child's bite. Basically, there are two separate issues that can arise with excessive and/or prolonged pacifier habits: **1) open bite** and **2) cross bite**. An open bite is caused when the pacifier is constantly between the upper and lower incisors and causes the front teeth to be displaced upward and outward. It can be seen when the back teeth are touching and there is still a open gap between the upper and lower front teeth. This can be reversible and will fix itself. A cross bite is caused by frequent, hard sucking on the pacifier. This causes the cheek muscles to become abnormally strong and stiff and actually restricts the growth of the top jaw. As the bottom jaw out-grows the top jaw, a cross bite develops for the back teeth. This is generally irreversible and will require expansion therapy later in life. Like many things related to pediatric dentistry, prevention is easier and better than correction therapy, so take an active role, limit the frequency and duration of pacifier use, and do your best to wean your child at the appropriate age. If you have any questions, contact your pediatric dentist. For tips on weaning your child, check out our fact on our website.

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**TRY TO REDUCE:**  
**1) INTENSITY,**  
**2) FREQUENCY,**  
**3) DURATION**

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