

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Pacifiers?

Recently the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) revised its policy on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Based on recent findings, the AAP no longer recommends placing an infant in the lateral (side) position sleep, instead "Every caregiver should use the back sleep position during every sleep".

Also the (AAP) does not recommend bed sharing during sleep. "Infants may be brought to bed for nursing or comforting but should be returned to their own crib when the parents are ready to sleep".

There is some evidence also that room sharing (i.e....having crib in parents room) might reduce the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Based on published, case control, studies which demonstrate significant reduction in the risks of SIDS with pacifiers the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) both recommend "that pacifiers should be offered to the infant when placed in all sleep periods including daytime naps and night sleeps". This applies to the first 12 months of life, which is peak age for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) risk. It's advised that the pacifier be encouraged but not forced and also be delayed for about a month in those children being breast fed.

As a practicing Pediatric Dentist, I have recommended encouraging pacifiers in infants to prevent thumb habits. I also found that pacifiers act as excellent mouth protectors when infants and children are toddling or learning to walk. This is the most common time for trauma to the mouth and teeth to occur in children.

The new recommendation from American Academy of Pediatrics & American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry that pacifiers should be introduced to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), convinces me more than ever that the pacifier should be encouraged in infants. Pacifiers like the thumb habit can cause distortion of the dental arch so this recommendation is only made if a dentist monitors the child on a regular basis.

The pacifier, unlike the thumb, can easily be discontinued if distortion of the arch starts to occur. The arch will naturally reshape to a normal position if this is caught in time.

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