



Exclusive Breastfeeding, Pacifiers and Safe Sleep

Baby-Friendly USA (BFUSA) promotes exclusive breastfeeding and the safe implementation of practices that support exclusive breastfeeding while also reinforcing safe sleep and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) reduction messages and practices. BFUSA believes strongly that the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, safe sleep, and SIDS reduction are complimentary initiatives. In fact, breastfeeding is recommended as a strategy for reducing SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths. The protective effect of breastfeeding increases with exclusivity.

BFUSA has received some questions from professionals working on safe sleep initiatives regarding the designation criteria related to pacifier use. The [BFUSA Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria](#) (GEC) related to Step 9 state that breastfed infants should not be given pacifiers by hospital staff and that mothers who request that their infants be given a pacifier be educated about how pacifier use could affect the success of breastfeeding. Early and frequent breastfeeding in the newborn period is essential to building up a mother's milk supply. Pacifier introduction too early in the breastfeeding relationship may interfere with this important biological process and mask potential breastfeeding problems. Furthermore, the GEC are also in alignment with the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) recommendation for pacifier use found in the [2012 AAP Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk](#). The policy statement recommends that mothers of healthy term infants be instructed to use pacifiers at infant nap or sleep time **after breastfeeding is well established**, at approximately 3 to 4 weeks of age. While it is acknowledged that the exact timeframe for the establishment of breastfeeding may vary from mother to mother, it rarely occurs during the first 2 days of life.

BFUSA acknowledges the evidence pertaining to pacifier education related to SIDS prevention. Safe sleep and SIDS prevention information is important for parents to receive during the birth hospital stay. This education may be compatibly provided to parents by using safe sleep materials that also promote breastfeeding. Since the [AAP SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2016 Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment](#) continues to call for pacifiers to be delayed until breastfeeding is firmly established, BFUSA will require hospitals distributing safe sleep materials to provide additional verbal and written education to mothers that includes the following:

1. Pacifier use in the breastfed infant should be delayed until breastfeeding is well established, usually around 3-4 weeks of life.
2. How mothers can know that breastfeeding is well established.
3. Breastfeeding is associated with a reduced risk of SIDS, and the protective effect increases with breastfeeding exclusivity.