

Benefits Spotlight

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Why You Should Avoid Homeopathic Teething Products

Fussiness, irritability, drooling, crying and bright red gums. If you're in the throes of teething, you'll likely go to any measure to give your child relief and restore your sanity.

While you may be enticed by drugstore shelves lined with homeopathic remedies promising fast relief of teething symptoms, it's best you avoid them. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning to consumers that homeopathic teething tablets and gels are dangerous for infants and young children. If you own these products, the FDA advises you throw them away.

The FDA specifically warns consumers to avoid products containing the ingredient belladonna, also known as deadly nightshade, which may be toxic to babies and young children. The FDA conducted laboratory testing that found some over-the-counter homeopathic teething remedies contained higher levels of belladonna than what was listed on the label.



The FDA's warning comes after reports that some infants and young children experienced seizure and other health concerns after using homeopathic teething tablets and gels. If your child experiences any of the following symptoms after using a homeopathic teething tablet or gel, call your doctor immediately:

- Seizures
- Problems breathing
- Sluggishness or extreme fatigue
- Muscle weakness
- Constipation and difficulty urinating
- Skin redness

The FDA says that in addition to posing a serious risk to babies and young children, the effectiveness of homeopathic teething tablets and gels has not been proven.

How to Keep Your Sanity and Get Through Teething Safely

Teething periods can seem endless, but they usually subside within two days. Instead of using homeopathic teething tablets and gels, use the safe methods below to get through the fussiness:

- Allow your child to chew on his or her hand, or rub your own finger along your baby's gums.
- Let your baby chew on a durable teething object. Many are made from plastic, rubber, silicone, or wood and come in fun shapes.
- Cold objects may help reduce pain and swelling. You can briefly (only for a few seconds) apply ice to your baby's gums or use a teething device designed to be frozen. Another option is to place a damp cloth in the freezer until it becomes cold (but not frozen solid)—your child can chew on the cloth to soothe painful gums.
- Allowing your child to chew a washcloth soaked in caffeine-free chamomile or clove tea may provide some additional relief, but make sure to get your pediatrician's approval before trying this method.

And, remember, once a baby's first tooth comes in, your child is ready for his or her first dental checkup. Call your dentist to schedule an appointment—it's a great step toward ensuring your child develops healthy oral health habits.

Sources

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Your Baby's Pacifier: Harmless Soother or Bad Habit?

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. As you start the year, it's a good time to consider the start of your child's oral health journey.

Your baby's pacifier has one of the earliest influences over your child's future oral health. Pacifiers are popular with babies because it helps satisfy their natural urge to self-soothe through sucking—and they're generally considered harmless when used during a child's first 18 months.

But many babies continue to use their pacifier past 18 months—and some even pick up the binky habit during toddlerhood. Though it's not a cause for concern if your toddler enjoys a pacifier, it does require some extra consideration. The tips below will help keep your child comforted and their dental health protected.



Pacifier Don'ts

1. **Choose a pacifier with lots of bells and whistles:** Don't give your child a pacifier that has multiple pieces or hard plastic, as this creates a choking hazard. Always choose a pacifier made of one single piece of durable material.
2. **Sweeten the deal:** Don't cover a pacifier in sugar to make it more appealing to your child. The increased sugar may increase your child's risk of developing cavities.
3. **Continue using past age 3:** Using a pacifier past age 3 can cause protruding front teeth and an overbite, so it's important to stop pacifier use once all your child's baby teeth have come in.

Pacifier Do's

1. **Know when to let go:** You should aim to wean your child off the pacifier by the time he or she is 2 years old. Talk to your dentist and pediatrician about strategies you can use to make the weaning process easier on both you and your child.
2. **Wash away the germs:** It likely comes as no surprise that pacifiers attract a lot of bacteria. Keep your child safe by washing the pacifier with soap and hot water after each use.
3. **Think before you blink:** When your child gets upset, don't automatically pass the pacifier. Take a moment to consider why your child is upset—perhaps he or she is sleepy or simply bored. Addressing the real need first will reduce the power of the pacifier.

The pacifier can be a source of great comfort for both parents and babies, but don't let it become too much of a good thing. Safely using the binky will start your child on a path toward a lifetime of healthy oral health habits.