Redwood Pediatric Dentistry
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Pacifiers: Benefits, Timing & How to Wean

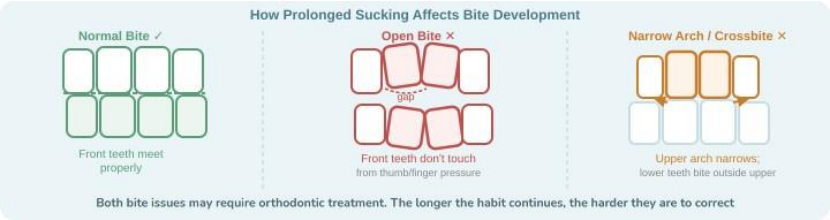
Pacifiers can be genuinely helpful in the early months, but timing matters when it comes to quitting. Here's what the evidence says and how to make the transition as smooth as possible

1 What the Experts Recommend



- **AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics):** Pacifiers may reduce the risk of SIDS when used for sleep up to 6 months, but should be weaned in the second half of the first year to avoid ear infections, interference with breastfeeding, and dental problems.
- **ADA (American Dental Association):** Recommends stopping by age 2, ideally no later than age 2.5.
- **AAPD (American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry):** Recommends quitting by 36 months at the latest.
- **Our recommendation:** From a dental standpoint, **6 to 12 months is the ideal window to wean**. Babies at this age are less attached to habits and more flexible, so quitting is easier and helping prevent bite issues and the future need for orthodontics.

2 How Pacifiers Affect the Mouth



- **Braces risk increases with time:** After 18 months, bite changes may not self-correct. By age 2, braces risk increases significantly. By age 3, most children with a habit will be recommended for orthodontic treatment.
- **Tongue posture:** A pacifier pushes the tongue down and forward, interfering with the natural swallowing pattern and resting posture that helps shape the palate.
- **Open bite:** Prolonged sucking pushes the front teeth apart so they can't touch. The longer the habit, the harder this is to correct.
- **Narrow arch / crossbite:** Sucking pressure narrows the upper arch, causing the lower teeth to bite outside the upper teeth.

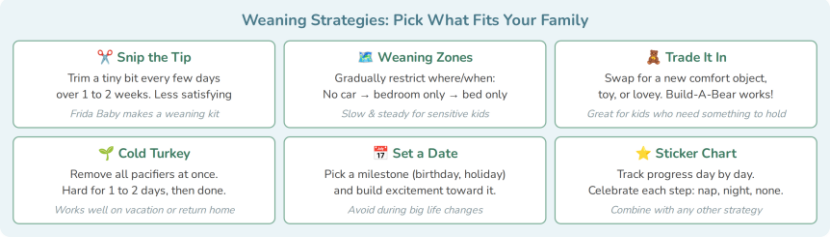
3 If Your Child Is Still Using a Pacifier

- **Choose age-appropriate sizes:** Pacifier sizes change as babies grow, so using the wrong size increases dental risk.

- **Look for an “orthodontic” shape:** These are flat on the bottom and designed to be less disruptive to bite and jaw development.
  - ***They are still affecting the bite!***
- **Avoid round bulb-shaped pacifiers:** The round shape puts more pressure on the palate and increases the risk of bite problems.

4 How to Help Your Child Quit

Every child is different. Keep it **positive, consistent, and patient**. Most kids need 4 to 6 weeks to fully quit. Relapses with stress or new siblings are normal. Just restart calmly.



- **Start the conversation:** Let your child know it’s time to say goodbye and why it matters for their “big kid teeth.” Books like ***Pacita the Pacifier Fairy*** can help introduce the idea.
- **Extra snuggles:** If they relied on the pacifier to self-soothe, offer extra comfort and help them find new calming routines like deep breathing, a special song, or a lovey.
- **Avoid quitting during major transitions:** Starting school, a new sibling, moving, or illness make weaning harder. Pick a calm window.
- **Slow down if your child starts sucking fingers or thumbs.** Trading one habit for another is a sign to ease off the pace and give the transition more time.
- **Frequency Duration Force: If limiting to 10 to 15 minutes a day, or it comes out at night, that is very helpful already. Sleep is also important.**

Need help with the transition?

Breaking a pacifier habit takes time and patience. If you’re struggling or want a more personalized plan, reach out. We’re happy to help your family through it.

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References

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Disclaimer: All information reflects the clinical approach of Dr. Niekia Franklin and is intended for general guidance only. Instructions given during your visit always take precedence. • www.redwoodpediatricdentist.com