

Pacifiers Linked to Ear Infections

Parents should avoid using a pacifier in infants who are prone to ear infections, research suggests. In a five-year study of almost 500 Dutch children researchers found almost double the risk of recurrent ear infections in those who used a pacifier. Writing in the Family Practice journal they said doctors should advise parents of the risk. Scientifically known as acute otitis media, ear infections are very common in young children. Antibiotics do not generally work and the infection tends clear on its own within a few days but some children are prone to repeated bouts. The researchers from University Medical Center, Utrecht said some studies before had found a link between pacifier use and ear infections but they had not been very accurate. Their research followed 476 children aged under four years, 216 of whom used a pacifier. There was a 90% increased risk of recurrent ear infections in those who sucked a pacifier compared with those who did not.

Susceptibility

The researchers said results suggested that the first infection may increase susceptibility to future ear infections. And using a pacifier may allow bacteria to more easily migrate from secretions in the nose to the middle ear, they suggested. Study leader, Dr Maroeska Rovers, said: "Paediatricians and GPs can use this information in their daily practice - they can dissuade parents from using a pacifier once their child has been diagnosed with acute otitis media to avoid recurrent episodes."

Professor Steve Field, chair of the Royal College of GPs said there had been previous studies but they had not been put together very well. "This is a very useful piece of research that shows use of pacifiers in children under the age of four who have a history of ear infections is not a good idea. "There's no need to panic but - in those children - not using a pacifier is likely to prevent recurrence."

[Source: BBC](#)