

# Oral Health Matters

Working together to improve your oral health

## PACIFIERS



For babies to suck is a natural reflex. It is how babies eat and feel safe. When a baby is not eating, a pacifier is better to use than a finger or thumb.

Pacifiers will not give your baby a bad bite. It is easier for a baby to be weaned from sucking a pacifier than being weaned from sucking a finger or thumb<sup>1</sup>. Children may suck their thumb until they are about 3 to 5 years of age. For those who do not quit, his/her dentist will closely watch the development of his/her teeth, especially the permanent teeth.

### Safe Pacifier Tips

- If you see your child sucking his or her fingers or thumb during the first 3 months of life, try giving your child a pacifier instead.
- Buy a pacifier with a nipple made of soft rubber to reduce gum soreness.
- Do not use the pacifier all the time.
- Do not dip baby's pacifier in honey or syrup.
- Look at the pacifier every day to be sure it is not worn or torn. A damaged pacifier can be harmful to your baby. A torn pacifier may cause the baby to choke.
- Do not hang the pacifier around your baby's neck with a string. The string could choke your baby.
- Buy a pacifier that looks like a baby bottle nipple and made of soft rubber.
- If you have questions, talk to your dentist or doctor.

<sup>1</sup>1995-1999 American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.