

# Sucking your baby's pacifier to clean it may prevent allergies

November 16 2018

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If the thought of sucking your baby's pacifier to clean it and then popping it in your baby's mouth grosses you out, think again. New research being presented at the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) Annual Scientific Meeting suggests a link between parental sucking on a pacifier and a lower allergic response among young children.

"We interviewed 128 [mothers](#) of infants multiple times over a period of 18 months and asked how they cleaned their child's pacifier," says allergist Eliane Abou-Jaoude, MD, ACAAI member and lead author on the study conducted by Henry Ford Health System in Detroit. "We found the [children](#) of mothers who sucked on the pacifier had lower IgE levels." IgE is a type of antibody related to allergic responses in the body. Although there are exceptions, higher IgE levels indicate a higher risk of having allergies and allergic asthma."

Of the 128 mothers completing multiple interviews, 58 percent reported current pacifier use by their child. Of those who had a child using a pacifier, 41 percent reported cleaning by sterilization, 72 percent reported hand washing the pacifier, and 12 percent reported parental pacifier sucking.

"We found that parental pacifier sucking was linked to suppressed IgE levels beginning around 10 months, and continued through 18 months," says allergist Edward Zoratti, MD, ACAAI member and co-author of the study. "Further research is needed, but we believe the effect may be due

to the transfer of health-promoting microbes from the parent's mouth. It is unclear whether the lower IgE production seen among these children continues into later years."

"We know that exposure to certain microorganisms early in life stimulates development of the immune system and may protect against allergic diseases later," says Dr. Abou-Jaoude. "Parental pacifier sucking may be an example of a way parents may transfer healthy microorganisms to their [young children](#). Our study indicates an association between parents who suck on their [child's](#) pacifier and children with lower IgE levels but does not necessarily mean that [pacifier](#) sucking causes lower IgE."

**More information:** Abstract Titles: Association Between Pacifier Cleaning Methods and Child Total IgE

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

Citation: Sucking your baby's pacifier to clean it may prevent allergies (2018, November 16) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-baby-pacifier-allergies.html>

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