

Sterilising pacifiers linked to increased risk of food allergies

May 4 2021



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A new study has linked sterilising pacifiers (or dummies) with an increased risk of food allergies in babies at age one.

The Barwon Infant Study compared dummy use and cleaning methods among [infants](#) at six months of age and those with a confirmed [food allergy](#) at one year of age in more than 700 participants in Geelong.

The research, published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, found infants whose dummies were sterilised with an antiseptic solution were more likely to have a diagnosed food allergy at the age of one.

Centre of Food and Allergy Research investigator and Murdoch Children's Research Institute Ph.D. candidate Victoria Soriano said the link between dummy sterilisation and food allergies warranted further research into how good bacteria in the infant mouth and gut could help prevent food allergies.

"These findings support the growing recognition of the importance of [good bacteria](#), known as 'microbiome', in our mouth and gut on healthy growth and development," Ms Soriano said.

The research found no increase in risk of food [allergy](#) at one year of age among dummy users when the dummies were washed in tap water, boiling water, put in the parent's own mouth, or not washed at all before being given to infants at six months of age.

"This research should not discourage the cleaning of dummies, as this is a vital step in keeping a child safe from the more immediate risk of infectious diseases," Ms Soriano said.

"There is also no evidence from this study that cleaning dummies by other methods is harmful."

With food allergies often causing life-threatening anaphylaxis and affecting up to 10 percent of infants, more research is required to

understand how to prevent allergies.

The study team has contacted the Royal Australasian College of Physicians who are further considering this issue.

More information: Victoria X. Soriano et al. Infant pacifier sanitization and risk of challenge-proven food allergy: A cohort study, *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jaci.2021.01.032](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2021.01.032)

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Citation: Sterilising pacifiers linked to increased risk of food allergies (2021, May 4) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-sterilising-pacifiers-linked-food-allergies.html>

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