

The Benefits of Sucking

By osteopath Caroline Penn DO (Hons) MSc MSCC

Why do babies suck? It's not just when they are hungry or in need of comfort...

Helping the petals of the flower unfold...

The bones of the infant head are designed to overlap to ease passage through the birth canal. Like the petals of a flower in bud, these overlapped bones should unfold after birth. Sucking is one of nature's methods of helping this unfolding. The breast demands a more powerful sucking action than the bottle. It is even more important to allow bottle fed babies to suck. When the bones don't unfold the baby may have a headache, or suffer from ill effects of the tight skull bones squeezing delicate nerves at the base of the skull. This can cause sleep disturbances, colic, constipation as well as head and neck positioning problems and sucking or feeding difficulties.

The 'O' sphincter muscles depend on sucking

A little known fact is that when we strengthen any set of sphincter muscles such as the lips, we strengthen all the sphincters in our body. This includes the eyes adapting to light, controlled bowel movement and stomach closure, preventing reflux.

Vision When a baby sucks their eyes are often transfixed on your face and you can see the eyes practising working together, learning to focus on a target, essential for perfect vision.

Hearing Sucking stimulates a little muscle in the middle ear which dampens the volume of the sounds we hear. Sucking therefore helps where hearing is oversensitive.

IQ – how can it be improved by sucking?

Sucking stimulates the two sides of the brain, building connections, needed for language development, reading, writing, maths, body orientation in sport and more.

Hormones, Growth & Development

Sucking stimulates the pituitary gland for balanced hormone production including human growth factor hormone.

Speech & breathing

Sucking helps the development of tongue and lip control with coordinated breathing, all of which are necessary for good speech.

Osteopathy can help both baby and mother

With baby for example, the jaw may be held back by tight muscles. This prevents the baby from taking the nipple fully into the mouth. The upper neck may be stiff due to compression of the spinal joints during birth. Mother may have problems that prevent her from adopting the most suitable breastfeeding such as low back pain, soreness of the pelvic floor, haemorrhoids, coccyx injuries, stitches from episiotomy, mastitis. Osteopathy will identify, relieve and resolve these problems.

If you would like to discuss your problem telephone osteopath Caroline Penn 01707 274148

This article was published in the National Childbirth Trust Magazine 2008

To make an appointment, please call **The Penn Clinic - 01707 274148**

Free of charge for newborn infants up to 2 weeks old

Osteopathy, Massage, Homeopathy, Counselling, Autogenics, Pilates, Allergy Therapy & HANDLE
For the whole family.....

About The Penn Clinic

With over 30 years' experience, The Penn Clinic gives you a range of treatments in safe, gentle hands. Our treatments are suitable for the whole family: Osteopathy, Pilates, Massage, Homeopathy, Counselling, Allergy treatment (NAET) and Autogenics. Our therapists work as a team with the osteopaths to provide a holistic approach to your problems. Full details are on our website www.pennclinic.co.uk

For information or to book an appointment, please contact us on: **01707 274 148**