



Should my child have a dummy?

Some babies are soothed and comforted by sucking and in many cases a dummy helps to settle them down. Toddlers and older children can also gain comfort from sucking as it can be very calming and gives them a feeling of security.



However, excessive dummy use can lead to the following long term problems:

- Your baby may develop disrupted sleeping patterns as they come to rely on the dummy and become distressed if they lose it during the night.
- Your child may breathe through their mouth rather than their nose. This is often linked to long-term dribbling.
- Babbling is an important part of early speech development; a dummy will prevent your baby from doing this and making sounds to communicate with you.
- A dummy stops you from using the tip of your tongue which can cause long-term speech difficulties.
- Tooth decay and dental problems where the upper and lower teeth do not meet properly.

Helping toddlers and older children kick the habit:

Quickly

- Pick a time when your child is relaxed and happy.
- Time throwing dummies away with a special occasion. Swap them for a new toy at a birthday or Christmas
- It is important to be persistent, your child may want their dummy back, try distracting them or using other ways to comfort them. Most parents say that after 3-5 days their child has forgotten about it.
- Throw all your child's dummies away. Don't hide them – your child will find them! It is too tempting to bring them out when they are tired

Slowly

- Gradually reduce the time your child has his/her dummy. Limit it to use in the house only, then at bedtime only, then swap all dummies for a new toy or give them to Santa.
- Toddlers love praise and encouragement – use a reward system e.g. set up a chart with stars or stickers for a week or two, praise them for only using the dummy at the limited times. Give them a sticker as a reward.

Tips for 'good' dummy use:

- Wean your child off their dummy before they are one-year-old. The longer you leave it the harder it will get!
- Don't get into the habit of using the dummy as an instant 'plug', for example, when watching television, playing or when out shopping. Children need to practise using muscles in the mouth and tongue to develop their talking, using the dummy as a 'plug' will prevent them from doing this.
- Try different ways of comforting.
- Use it at set times only – when tired, upset or settling down to sleep.
- If your baby/child is trying to babble, make sounds or talk with the dummy in, take it out.
- Don't dip the dummy in sweet liquids e.g. honey, as this can rot their teeth.

**If you have any questions please contact the Speech and Language
Therapy Department on 01902 444363**