

Dummy advice for parents

Why use a dummy?

When babies are small, dummies can be used to help soothe, settle and support sleeping.

Parents of babies that are born prematurely or who are sick may be advised to use a dummy



Tips for dummy use

- Always use a dummy with a flat or orthodontic teat.
- Never dip the dummy in anything
- Dummies need to be kept clean and sterilised
- Always remove the dummy from your child's mouth when they are babbling or talking.
- Don't let the dummy become a habit.
- Don't just give your child their dummy, wait for them to request it.
- Wean your baby off their dummy as soon as possible, preferably before 12 months old. It is much easier at this stage than to wait until the child is 2-3 years old!

Potential dummy problems

- Babies who have a dummy in their mouth are less likely to copy sounds that adults make, play with sounds and babble themselves.
- Playing with sounds and babbling is important for the development of speech skills.
- Children who use dummies too much are at risk of learning and embedding incorrect speech patterns. They learn to make 'front' sounds at the back of the mouth and may still do this even when the dummy has gone. This is very hard to fix once it is an established speech pattern.
- Excessive dummy use can cause dental problems

How can I wean my child off their dummy?

As your baby grows they will need their dummy less and less. Stopping dummy use is recommended by 8-12 months.

- Reduce the amount of time your child uses their dummy.
- Try keeping for bed and nap times only.
- Distract them from wanting their dummy by engaging them in different experiences.
- Don't give up. Once the dummy has gone, they will learn to settle without it.
- Reward for time spent without their dummy with praise, stickers, activities etc.



Tips for giving up the dummy

6-12 months - Dummies make it harder to babble

- When your baby is awake and happy they don't need a dummy. Dummies tend to silence babies and can make it harder for adults to interact with them.
- Think of other ways to soothe your baby. Dummies can help, but so can cuddles, rocking, singing, sharing a book, a favourite toy or just talking to them.
- 'Mouthing' toys is an important part of development so make sure your baby has safe toys to chew.



1-2 years - Early words take practice

- Toddlers make sounds that gradually become recognisable as words. Dummies can get in the way of practising these sounds.
- Always remove your child's dummy when they are trying to babble or talk.
- Distraction can work well at this age as toddlers find it hard to think about two things at the same time. If they are busy, they forget about the dummy!
- Remember, your time and attention are the best distraction!



2-3 years - There is so much to say

- Toddlers talking really changes from 2-3 years, and they are learning to put words into sentences. Dummies get in the way. It's important that you can hear what they are trying to say.
- If your child goes to nursery or a children's centre they may have a 'dummy tree' for them to hang their dummies. If not ask staff if they can help to make one.
- Give your child lots of praise and attention for time without a dummy. Remember, you are the best toy!



3 years + - I don't need a dummy anymore!

- Involve your child in making a plan to give up their dummy.
- Some children may choose to give it up like a favourite character in a book. Others may give it to the baby elves, fairies or the Easter bunny, in exchange for a small gift.
- Some children may just throw it away as they don't need it now that they are 'big'.
- When the dummy is lost or broken, don't replace it.
- Celebrate success and don't give up!!!

