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Dummies

Supporting your child to reduce dummy use

Dummies can be a great comfort to babies. They often help little ones settle and sleep, which can make daily life calmer for everyone. But as children grow, prolonged dummy use can begin to affect the development of speech and teeth.

Between 6–12 months, babies start to babble as they learn how to make new sounds. Using a dummy too frequently can limit this important stage of language development, making it harder for babies to practise early sounds and words. As teeth emerge, constant sucking may also lead to small gaps between the upper and lower teeth, which encourages the tongue to move forward in an immature pattern. This can make certain sounds (like 't' and 's') harder to pronounce and may contribute to a mild lisp. Experts generally recommend gently reducing dummy use anytime after six months, when babies begin developing key speech and oral-motor skills.

Tips for reducing dummy Use (6–12 months)

- Offer another item to mouth, such as a teething ring.
- Provide comfort in other ways — cuddling, rocking, talking, floor play, or going for a walk.
- Offer a snack or drink if they seem unsettled and are due food.
- Keep the dummy for sleep times only so your baby can practise sounds during the day.

Tips for 1–3 years

Children at this age understand more and can begin to let go of the dummy with a gentle, consistent approach

- Don't offer the dummy unless your child asks.
- Keep only one dummy in the house and store it out of reach.
- When they ask, give it calmly — no fuss.
- Each day, wait slightly longer before giving the dummy, helping your child practise waiting.
- Over time, they may fall asleep before the dummy is offered — a positive sign they're ready to let it go.

Supporting children over 3 years

At this age, many children can understand simple explanations and take part in the process of giving up their dummy. Some ideas that have worked for families include:

- Giving the dummy to Santa or the Easter Bunny in exchange for a gift.
- Explaining that "big children don't need a dummy anymore."
- Exchanging it for a small treat or reward.
- Agreeing, "This is your last dummy — when it breaks, we won't buy any more."
- If a new sibling is arriving, consider weaning earlier so the older child doesn't feel left out.

Once your child has accepted giving up their dummy, it's best to throw it away rather than keeping it "just in case." This removes temptation for both you and your child. Staying consistent is key — even if it feels tough at first, children usually forget very quickly once the routine changes.

Dummy vs thumb sucking

Some parents prefer dummies because they can be taken away, while thumbs can't. This can be true — but children often stop thumb-sucking naturally when busy playing. Ultimately, the goal is to support your child in finding comfort in ways that also protect healthy speech and dental development

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