

Dummy use

For babies 0-12 months dummies can help to settle or soothe. When dummies are used too much or for too long they can affect speech development.



The more a child talks with a dummy the more likely they are to need long term speech therapy. It can also lead to ear infections and affect teeth.

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Top Tips for stopping dummy use

Try to wean your child off their dummy when they are about 1 year old - the longer you wait the harder it will be.

- Try not to automatically give your child their dummy – wait until they indicate they want it.
- Remove the dummy from your child's mouth when he talks.
- Try reading with your child at bedtime to comfort him instead of using a dummy - if a dummy is needed then try to use only for a few minutes to settle your child.
- Be careful not to replace the dummy with a bottle. Sucking on a bottle teat can also impact on speech development and healthy teeth.
- Try giving it to the 'Dummy Fairy' for a small reward or use a big celebration as a reason to stop its use.
- Some nurseries and pre-schools have a dummy tree when children start a new year or move to a new room.

What you Need to Know

When a dummy is used too much or for too long it can:

- Stop babies from babbling, copying and exploring sounds. This is a vital stage in the development of speech.
- Increase the risk of a child needing long term speech and language therapy. Many speech sounds are made at the front of the mouth (p, b, t, d, s, f). Regular dummy/ bottle users may struggle to develop these sounds.
- Prevent a child from learning to control saliva by closing their mouth and swallowing, resulting in them dribbling more than would be expected for their age.
- Result in incorrect positioning of teeth and increase the risk of tooth decay.
- Allow bacteria into the middle ear from the nasal area and cause ear infections.

What else can you do?

- Keep dummies for sleep time only.
- Use a reward chart with a sticker for every 'dummy free' day.
- Many nurseries, pre-schools and libraries have stories and books to support children, ask to borrow one.
- Get your child to throw the dummy in the bin now they are 'grown up'.
- Once you remove the dummy, don't be tempted to give it back.

