

The dos and don'ts of dummies (The National Literacy Trust 2008)

During your baby's early months a dummy can help to soothe. This is understandable, as most babies have a strong sucking reflex and the dummy can, in many cases, help to settle the child.

However using the dummy too much can lead to the following problems:

Teeth:

- * Incorrect positioning of teeth so that the bottom and top teeth at the front don't meet properly
- * Tooth decay (especially the front teeth) if the dummy is dipped into sweet things

Mouth breathing:

- * Your child may tend to breathe through their mouth rather than their nose. This is often linked to long-term dribbling

Speech and language problems:

- * Your child may not use the full range of tongue movements that are necessary for making all the speech sounds
- * Your child has fewer opportunities to babble and use sounds to communicate with you

Things you need to know about dummies

What you should know

- * Speech and language therapists recommend that children over 12 months old do not use a dummy.
- * If your child uses a dummy a lot, it may affect speech and language development by restricting tongue movements, making speech sound unclear or causing a gap in the front teeth that may lead to a lisp.
- * Dummies may also make it more difficult for your child to swallow and may make your child more "dribbly"

What can you do if your child uses a dummy?

- * Aim to get rid of the dummy/bottle around 12 months or sooner.
- * Use a flat teat rather than a cherry teat as this has less effect on teeth.
- * Try cuddling or reading to your child before bedtime instead of giving the dummy/bottle.
- * Remove the dummy/bottle when your child is trying to talk.
- * Praise your child if s/he will give up the dummy/bottle.
- * Choose the right time to give up - not when you are under pressure.
- * Once you have decided to give up the dummy/bottle, don't be tempted to give it back and make sure there are none left around!

Ideas that parents have tried

- * Give the dummy/bottle to Santa.
- * Swap the dummy/bottle for a gift/cuddly toy/new toothbrush.
- * Pretend to give the dummy/bottle to a friend's baby.
- * Get the child to throw the dummy/bottle in the bin.
- * Hand the dummy/bottle to your local speech and language therapist who will give your child a sticker or picture to colour in.

Things parents have told us:

- * It wasn't as bad as I thought, I just decided it had to go.
- * He has started talking now so we have gotten rid of the dummy.
- * After a couple of nights he stopped asking for the dummy.

Using a dummy can affect my talking

NHS
Forth Valley

Dummies can be good to help settle and soothe me, but they can make it difficult for me to communicate with you.

Leaving my dummy in while I'm trying to talk can affect my speech sounds.

It might also discourage me from chatting to you.

Please take it out when I am talking or playing.

Try to wean me off my dummy by the time I am 1 year old.



ChattyTuesday

The Picture Communication Symbols ©1981–2016 by Tobii Dynavox. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. Used with permission.
Boardmaker® is a trademark of Tobii Dynavox.