

## Dummy Use

Dummies can be useful at times, for example, helping to soothe babies to sleep and giving them security. Research has also shown that use of a dummy can reduce the risk of cot death in babies up to 12 months.

### **BUT**

Research has also told us that dummy use, in toddlers and older children, during the day can lead to:

**Speech problems** - Because the dummy is in the way, speech sounds may be made in the wrong place in your child's mouth, may cause lisps or unclear "slushy" sounds.

**Communication difficulties** - If your baby is using a dummy they will be less likely to smile, babble or chat with you and you will have fewer chances to smile, babble and talk to them. It is important they have this opportunity to allow them to express themselves.

**Dental issues** - Dummy use can affect the position of teeth as they grow. Tooth decay may develop if the dummy is regularly dipped into something sweet.

**Health problems** - Children who use dummies are more likely to get ear and mouth infections.

**Feeding issues** - Using a dummy may delay the development of chewing and eating skills.

**Dribbling / drooling** - A dummy can cause children to dribble more by making it difficult for your child to close his mouth and swallow properly.

### **Tips for children using a dummy**

- Don't automatically presume that your baby will need a dummy—all children are different.
- Use a dummy as little as possible e.g. at sleep time only.
- Always remove your child's dummy when they are making noises, talking or playing.
- When your child is upset, try and find out why and distract him with something instead of giving the dummy.
- Remember, the sooner you break the habit the easier it will be! Do this, by choosing a time when your child is well and happy but be prepared for them to be upset for a few days. Try leaving the dummy at home when you go out or swapping the dummy for a special toy.

### **Stopping the dummy- Ideas that have worked**

- 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.
- Put it under the pillow for the "fairies" to give to a baby and swap for a reward.
- Give the dummy/bottle to Santa.

Go to

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/topics/pacifier>  
for more ideas.