

All About Dummies

by Blackpool Teaching Hospitals - Tuesday, January 10, 2012

Some parents find a dummy useful in the early months of their baby's life to help soothe their baby.

This leaflet gives information and advice regarding the use of dummies. Some parents find a dummy useful in the early months of their baby's life to help soothe their baby. However, some children continue to suck dummies beyond the time when they should need them as a comforter.

Think about whether you need to use a dummy for your baby. If you decide to use one remember to use it carefully and appropriately, i.e. to settle your child. Prolonged use of a dummy can lead to problems in the following areas:

Dental Health

- Upper and lower front or back teeth may not meet properly.
- Teeth may develop unevenly.

Tongue control

- The tongue may be pushed into an incorrect and unnatural position, which will affect its movement.
- This can affect the development of chewing and swallowing and may also lead to dribbling.

Communication

Babies have fewer opportunities to babble and interact with you when they have a dummy in their mouth.

Speech Sounds

Dental and tongue problems may lead to difficulties producing some speech sounds especially those sounds such as "s", "t" and "d" which are made using the front of the tongue.

Sleeping

Use of a dummy can cause or make sleep problems worse as the baby may wake up and start searching for the dummy. Parents may have to get up and find the dummy.

Remember

- Wean your baby off the dummy as early as possible. Begin reducing your child's dummy use before 12 months.
- Do not let a dummy become a habit for baby or you – if a dummy is necessary use it only for a few minutes to settle your baby. Take it out of your baby's mouth once asleep.
- Never dip a dummy in sugary substances – this can lead to tooth decay.
- Never try to clean a dummy by putting it in your mouth before putting it in your baby's mouth – sterilise it or rinse it under a tap.
- Only have one dummy in use, to be available only when necessary.

For Older Children

- Do not let your child talk or even make noise with a dummy in their mouth – always remove it.
- Restrict dummy use to bedtime or when the child is ill. Encourage your child to leave it in the cot when they get up. By 18 months your child should be using the dummy at night, only if needed.
- Always take the dummy out of your child's mouth when they are asleep.
- Keep your child busy or distract your child if they ask for the dummy.
- Father Christmas or the Fairies can magic the dummy away and leave a small present for discarding it.
- Ask other parents what they have done to wean their child off a dummy.
- Remember you can always ask your Health Visitor, Speech and Language Therapist, Dentist or Dental Nurse for advice.