



## Using Dummies



Dummies can help...

- To soothe and relax your baby
- Parents manage during difficult times

**But... regular and extended use of a dummy or a bottle can create problems with your child's speech.**

### Speech sounds and talking:

- Dummies can prevent babies from babbling – an important step in learning to talk.
- Many sounds are made at the front of the mouth e.g. p, t, d etc. Regular dummy use may result in your child not developing these sounds properly
- Learning to talk can be tricky, so toddlers need lots of practice. Children learn words by listening to and copying adults.
- A dummy may discourage your toddler from chatting with you.

### Advice:

You may consider offering a dummy when settling the baby to sleep.

- If you are breastfeeding, wait until your baby is over 4 weeks old, and breastfeeding is well established

- If you are using a dummy at sleep times; use it consistently within the baby's sleeping routine until your baby is over 6 months old.
- Aim to withdraw the dummy between the ages of **6 to 12 months** to avoid any negative effects; at this age you can also start to wean your baby off a bottle and start using a cup to drink.

### Ideas to help...

- Don't use the dummy as an instant 'plug', try to identify the problem.
- Use the dummy as a last resort if a baby is unwell or going to sleep, try not to use it when your baby is content so that they can practise using their voices!
- Take the dummy out when your child is awake. If your toddler is still using a dummy, always ask them to take it out before you talk to each other.
- Never dip your child's dummy in anything sweet. This could lead to tooth decay.

### Practical ideas...

- Offer a comfort blanket or try reading a story instead
- Give the dummy to Father Christmas or the dummy fairy
- Swap the dummy for a reward
- Once you remove the dummy, don't be tempted to give it back. Most babies and toddlers will fret for no more than two or three days.