

How To Ditch The Dummy

For the reasons mentioned, it is a good idea to reduce and restrict the use of dummies as early as possible. It can be a daunting prospect to wean your child off a their dummy but here are some ideas on how to help with the process:

If trying to wean children off a dummy gradually...

- Start by removing the dummy for short periods of time when your child is doing something they enjoy eg playing or looking at books
- Restrict use to night time only, taking the dummy out once the child has fallen asleep

With older children it may be more appropriate to get rid of the dummy completely, in which case...

- Swap the dummy with another source of comfort e.g. a soft cuddly toy
- Use star charts or a small reward for each day and a bigger reward at the end of the week (NOT sweets!)
- Help your child accept the dummy has gone by telling them they are a big boy/ girl now and they could leave it under their pillow for the dummy fairy or encourage them to put in in the bin.
- Don't try to remove the dummy whilst the child is experiencing other changes eg a new sibling, starting nursery etc.
- Don't encourage dummy sucking by dipping the dummy in food or drinks

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Dummies and their impact on speech development



What sounds do children say and when?

The Effects of Using A Dummy

Many parents give their babies and young children dummies to help them get to sleep and to comfort them. Babies have a strong sucking reflex and some research has shown that the use of dummies can help very young babies establish good sucking patterns. However, there are concerns about the long-term use of dummies, particularly on children's speech and language development.

Of course not all children who have dummies will develop speech difficulties, and many children who present with speech difficulties have never been exposed to a dummy. But we do know that dummies restrict the movement of the mouth and tongue that is necessary to produce speech sounds correctly, and therefore they are likely to have an impact on children's speech.

Age	Your child will probably use these sounds	Your child may NOT use these sounds
1 1/2 - 2 yrs	m,n,p,b,t,d sounds	Your child may not use sounds at the ends of words
2 1/2 - 3yrs	m,n,p,b,t,d f,s, w,y,h	Some long sounds like 's,f,v sh,ch' may not have developed so he may say 'bideo' for 'video', 'bish' or 'bid' for fish or 'dun' for sun. He may not use 'k' and 'g' sounds but use a 't' or 'd' instead so he may say 'dar' for car and 'det' for get
3-4 yrs	m,n,p,b,t,d,k,g f,v,s perhaps sh w,y,h perhaps l	Blend sounds like 'sp', 'st', 'bl', 'cr' may not have developed so he may say 'poon' for spoon, 'bue' for blue and 'cisps' for crisps
4-5yrs	m,n,p,b,t,d,f,v s,z,sh,ch,j,w,l,y, h blends may start to develop e.g sp', 'st', 'bl', 'cr'	Children often don't learn to use 'th' or 'r' sounds until they are at least 6 yrs old. Many adults don't use these sounds either and it is unlikely that a speech and language therapist would work on these sounds.

Using a dummy can result in the following:

- Delayed spoken language
- Fewer opportunities to communicate with others, leading to reduced interactions (it is harder for a child to respond or initiate conversations if they have a dummy in their mouth!)
- Less babbling and experimenting with speech sounds when the dummy is in the mouth
- Development of 'slushy' or 'lispy' speech sounds as a child tries to talk around the dummy and air escapes over the sides of the tongue
- Teeth and palate can be negatively affected, both of which are important for making speech sounds
- Drooling as sucking causes more saliva to be produced. This can also be caused by poor lip closure as having a dummy can hinder full development of the mouth muscles needed for drinking
- Use of dummies has also been linked to ear infections which can affect children's speech and language development even long after the infection has cleared up