

Dummies



Dummies can play a very helpful role in soothing a baby and helping them to settle more quickly. However there are risks associated with the prolonged use of a dummy.



What are the common difficulties?

- Speech and Language problems - children cannot form sounds properly if a dummy is restricting their tongue and lip movements
- Fewer opportunities to babble and communicate
- Infections of the middle ear may be caused by constant sucking. These may lead to hearing problems and delayed speech.
- Dental Problems - delay in teething incorrect positioning of the teeth and jaw.
- Stomach upsets caused by 'dirty' dummies
- An habitual open-mouthed posture
- The tongue is prevented from developing the full range of movements needed for speech production.
- Dribbling (and sore chins) for longer

Why do difficulties occur with dummies?

Parents are reluctant to reduce or limit their child's use of a dummy because:-

- Research has shown for the first six months putting babies to bed with a dummy can halve the risk of cot deaths
- Many parents find dummies help soothe their child
- Some parents use dummies to keep their child quiet

How can we help?

- Ensure that parents understand why the use of dummies should be restricted.
- Encourage Parents to set firm rules about dummy use - limit the time it is used e.g. only at bedtime, only in the bedroom, never outside the house etc
- Do not use after twelve months of age
- Provide parents with strategies to help their child stop using the dummy. E.g. Deciding whether to reduce dummy use gradually or on a certain date. Encouraging the child to give the dummy to Santa or the tooth fairy, Swapping it for a new toy, Taking it to farm and 'leaving' it for the baby lambs/ animals. Using star charts, rewards, treats for non use of the dummy.
- Support the parents to be firm!
- Remove the dummy if a child wants to talk to you
- Wait until the child asks for the dummy rather than giving it automatically
- Never dip a dummy in jam, sugar etc
- Suggest to parents starting at bedtime when the child has other sleep triggers and will go to sleep regardless of lots of protests.

