

Moving on from...dummies

Speech and language therapists and dentists advise that dummy use from six months is limited to sleep or nap time only and given up completely from 12 months.

Children who **don't** use dummies long term:

- are able to develop their mouth muscles in a way that supports their speech development
- are less likely to suffer from ear or throat infections and tummy upsets (ear and throat infections can lead to glue ear)
- are less likely to experience dental problems as their second teeth develop

Tips for moving on from dummies

For children under 2

This is the best time to try giving up the dummy as its use has not yet become a habit!

- Reduce dummy use gradually by limiting when your baby has their dummy and not replacing lost or broken ones until there are no more, or
- Decide on a day to stop dummy use completely and stick to it! Choose a week where things are as calm as possible at home – avoid stressful or busy times to make it easier for you and your baby!
- Once you have given up the dummy don't go back to it; it is confusing for your baby and will make it harder to give up in the long run. Think of other ways to calm or soothe your baby (singing, cuddles, stories or toys can be great distractions)

For children over 2

- Reduce dummy use gradually by limiting to bed time only and not replacing lost or broken dummies until they have all gone, or
- Decide on a day to give up completely. Choose a time you know you will be able to focus on helping your child through giving up their dummy

They will, by now, be developing a dependency on their dummy. Think about how you can best support them:

- Keep them busy! Lots of trips out and playing together to keep them distracted from thinking about their dummy
- Give them plenty of cuddles, songs, and stories to calm and soothe them instead of the dummy
- Giving dummies to the Easter bunny, dummy fairy or Father Christmas can work well, especially if they leave a toy instead. Or you could bury them in the garden, plant something and watch it grow!
- Show them how brilliant they are. Have some motivating rewards handy – some children love stickers; others may prefer a trip to the park or a small toy. Start by rewarding after one day, then after three, then after five and again after another five

When using a dummy, always follow the **LOOK, LISTEN** and **THINK** rule.

LOOK at your baby. Can you see something that is making them sad that you can fix without using a dummy?

LISTEN to their cries – you might be able to tell what they want by their different cries.

THINK about what else could help – try distracting them with a song, cuddle, favourite toy, etc