



THE LOWDOWN ON DUMMIES



Dummies (& baby bottles) can be really helpful in soothing young babies, especially if they have colic or at bedtime. Sucking is a calming activity which also helps babies organise themselves. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a baby having a dummy (as long as it's not dipped in anything!).



BUT

Think of all the things your child can't do with a dummy or bottle in their mouth...



Too much dummy and bottle use can also lead to:

- teeth growing in the wrong place, so that your child's upper and lower teeth don't meet;
- your child's **tongue** being pushed to the back or pulled to the front of the mouth: both these positions encourage incorrect development of speech sounds and make your child harder to understand;
- excessive **dribbling**, resulting in a sore chin and wet clothes;
- increased **infections** due to increased germs in the mouth for prolonged periods;
- delayed **play**: children *need* to mouthe toys in order to learn;
- unwillingness to **talk**, resulting in delayed speech and language.

Try to wean your toddler or child off the dummy as soon as you can; the younger they are, the easier it is!

If you are using a dummy, remember:

- the dummy is not a plug and should never be used to stop your child talking!
- wait until your child asks for the dummy rather than giving it to him/her automatically;
- when your toddler cries, s/he is trying to tell you something, so try and find out what is wrong first;
- use the dummy as a last resort;
- use the dummy selectively, e.g., only in your child's cot/bed;
- ALWAYS take your child's dummy out when s/he is talking. If s/he tries talking with it in, say you can't understand him/her;
- NEVER dip a dummy in anything sweet; it causes tooth decay.



Ideas for giving up the dummy (or bottle):

- Limit it to the cot/bed at first, then go for giving it up completely;
- Try making the break when you have support and time; if you have to get up for work or the school run the next day, it may not be the best time. Be prepared that they will be upset;
- Warn your toddler that the dummy will go: you could try a countdown chart. Don't do the chart more than a week ahead though;
- The 'dummy fairy' could come at night, take the dummy away and leave a toy instead;
- Have a ceremonial 'throwing away of the dummy' in exchange for a favourite treat;
- Tell your child that 'big girls and boys don't need dummies: they have other toys instead'. Then give them another toy;
- Dispose of it at a milestone time such as your child's first birthday or at Christmas;
- When your child asks for the dummy, distract him/her with toys for which they need their mouth; e.g., blowing bubbles, musical instruments;
- Swap your child's bottle for a special drinking cup, perhaps one they choose themselves.

