

Use of dummies

Try to reduce the use of dummies to support your child's communication skills.

- In babies and young children, dummies may have some value as a comforter. By the time a child is 12 months old, instead of being a comforter it will have become a habit!
- Dummies can be useful to help a child to sleep. Unlike a thumb they have the advantage that you can more easily withdraw them.
- Dummies can make it difficult to talk – it's hard to talk with something in your mouth! Lots of sounds need us to use the front of our mouth (for example, 'p', 'b', 't', and 's' sounds); regular dummy use may mean that your child finds it harder to learn how to say these sounds.
- It is a good idea to limit the dummy usage to particular periods of time, e.g. bed time only. Keep the dummy somewhere so that it can be only accessed by an adult.
- When stopping dummy use altogether, it is advisable to do this by involving your child. If your child is old enough to understand, make a big show of throwing it away. Get your child to help you wrap it up, sellotape it and throw it together in the bin outside. Throw it out near the time when the bins are collected, so there is limited chance for its retrieval! If disposing of the dummy, make sure there are no others around at home. Do not keep one in a cupboard just in case!
- Children may be upset initially, but this will pass. Think about other forms of comforters for bedtime and/or a special toy to give them when they are upset.
- Removing the dummy can be linked to a special occasion, e.g. a birthday or holiday, when plans for 'being more grown up' can be made.
- Remember!
 - Dummies can make it difficult to talk. Get your child to remove the dummy when they want to talk.
 - NEVER dip a dummy in any sugary food as this will lead to tooth decay later.
 - Do not use a neck tie or cord on the dummy.

