

Helping your child become Dummy free



Helping your child to talk, communicate and grow

Dummies can be a wonderful source of comfort for babies and young children, particularly when they are tired, upset or settling to sleep. However, as children grow, it is helpful to gradually reduce and eventually stop using a dummy.

Health guidance recommends beginning to phase out dummy use during infancy, with NHS information advising that parents aim to phase it out between **6 and 12 months**.

Why is it important?

When children are awake, playing and interacting, having a dummy in their mouth can reduce opportunities to:

- **Babble and experiment with sounds**
- **Practise moving their lips, tongue and jaw**
- **Chat and interact with other people**
- **Develop clear speech**
- **Practise the communication skills they need as they grow**

Extended dummy use may contribute to difficulties with speech and dental development, particularly when children frequently have a dummy in their mouth while awake.

For this reason, if your child still uses a dummy, try to make sure it is **out of their mouth whenever they are talking, playing or communicating**.

Ready to start? Try these small steps

Giving up a dummy can be a big change, so don't worry if it doesn't happen immediately.

1. Start by reducing daytime use

Try keeping the dummy for particular situations, such as sleep time, rather than having it available throughout the day. Keep it somewhere your child cannot automatically reach it.

2. Find another source of comfort

If your child's dummy helps them to feel secure, replace it with something else that provides comfort. This could be:

a favourite teddy
a cuddle
a favourite story
a familiar song
a special bedtime comforter

NHS services recommend offering alternative comfort and distraction as children move away from their dummy.

Praise every little success

Try:

"Wow! You've been playing without your dummy!"

"I can hear your lovely talking!"

"You put your dummy away all by yourself. Well done!"

Praise, encouragement and simple reward approaches such as stickers can help children feel proud of their progress.

Make saying goodbye special

When your child is ready, you could:

Leave the dummies for the **Dummy Fairy**
Swap them for a small gift or new teddy
Put them into a special goodbye box
Swap the dummy for a special new toothbrush
Read a story together about saying goodbye to a dummy

Making your child part of the process can help them understand what is happening.

Remember: comfort first

Giving up a dummy **isn't a competition**.

Some children will manage it very quickly, while others will need more time and reassurance. If your child is going through a significant change, is unwell or is particularly unsettled, they may find giving up their comforter more difficult.

Be **kind, calm and consistent**. If you're reducing dummy use, try not to automatically offer it when your child becomes upset. Start with cuddles, reassurance or distraction instead.



If your child is talking, the dummy comes out!

For further information and support please see the link below or talk to your child's teacher.

