

Using a dummy.

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This leaflet aims to provide you with information to help you make a decision about whether or not to use a dummy for your baby.

It is based on current researched evidence.

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References—correct as of November 2016

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Ways of soothing and calming your baby

- Skin contact with your baby in the early days and beyond will encourage healthy brain development.
- Holding your baby close.: When babies have lots of cuddles and love, you both release a hormone called oxytocin. This helps you both feel calm and happy.
- Rocking, swaying, singing, talking and massaging your baby



If you decide to use a dummy

Dummy use is recognised as a parental choice determined by the needs of your baby. If you decide to use a dummy it is recommended that you consider waiting until your baby is about four–six weeks old. This will allow you to establish a good milk supply if you are breastfeeding. Dummy use can also interfere with how you interpret the signals that your baby gives when they are hungry.

Dummy use for premature babies

An orthodontic dummy is sometimes recommended by a health professional if your baby is born prematurely. This can help to establish and develop early sucking skills required for feeding although it does have the potential to interfere with breastfeeding



Dummy use and sleep

- There are some studies that suggest using a dummy MIGHT reduce the chance of sudden infant death, however, the reasons for this are not clear. There is currently a lack of researched based information available to support this.
- If you choose to use a dummy it is recommended that you offer it consistently at the beginning of every sleep both day and night.
- If the dummy falls out during baby's sleep there is no need to keep putting it back in.

Safe dummy use

- Never use a dummy with a neck cord or other attachments as this may lead to choking
- Don't force your baby to take a dummy or put it back in if your baby spits it out.
- Don't put anything sweet on the dummy.
- Keep it as clean as possible by regularly sterilising as you would any other bottle or feeding teat.
- Check dummies regularly as cracks, splits and holes can trap germs.

It is recommended that you stop giving a dummy to your baby between 6 and 12 months.

Dummy Use in Toddlers (over 12 months)

Speech and Language Development

- Once a child starts to make sounds, persistent dummy use can impact on babbling and experimentation of sounds. When a child has a dummy in their mouth they are less likely to copy sounds an adult makes or to attempt to babble and play with sounds themselves. These are important skills for speech development.
- Your child may not be able to make the full range of tongue movements necessary for making all the speech sounds if they frequently have a dummy in their mouth,. This could lead to delayed speech sound development and/or unclear speech.



Teeth

- The longer your baby uses a dummy the more likely it is to change the way the teeth grow.
- Prolonged dummy use can lead to tooth decay, especially the front teeth if the dummy is dipped in sweet things.

Middle Ear Infection.

There is some suggestion that sucking on a dummy for long periods can result in your baby having middle ear infections (NICE 2009) although the evidence to support this is limited.