

## Farewelling The Dummy

### Dummies - What Are The Downsides?

It's true that dummies can be beneficial for infants under 6 months of age, however the prolonged use of dummies (over 12-18 months) has been linked to:

- High rates of middle ear infections;
- Inaccurate development of speech sounds;
- Incorrect positioning of teeth (e.g. open bite);
- Promotion of forward tongue carriage (e.g. tongue thrust);
- Mouth breathing (linked to increased dribbling);
- Limiting opportunities to practice and develop expressive language skills.

It's therefore recommended that toddlers and preschoolers farewell their dummies as soon as possible. Below are some strategies to help gently remove your child's dummy.

- First, limit the dummy use by keeping it out of sight (out of sight, out of mind).
- Look at your routine and work out (with others involved with your child) when your child can have a dummy and when they can't. Go one step further and think of other things you can do with your child to distract him when he does want it (e.g. Read him a book, go outside and play) Then praise and reinforce this behaviour (e.g. "I love playing with you outside, it's so much fun!").
- Talk to your child about giving up the dummy.
- As removing a dummy is a big event for your child, plan ahead and ensure it does not coincide with a big event such as toilet training, the birth of a new sibling or moving house.
- A reward chart for dummy free times and days can work well to phase dummies out completely. When your child goes a whole day without their dummy, reward them with a gold star and an extra story before bed (or another reward that is more motivating). Once your child gets a certain number of stars, you can give them a special treat.
- Mark the occasion of being dummy free with a celebration or reward.
- It is important to be consistent with the method you use to wean the dummy. Give your child lots of cuddles and kisses while they adjust to the change.
- Many parents swap the dummy for another comforter. One mother had Santa arrive a bit earlier to their house. They "posted all their dummies" to him and the other babies (as the child was now a "big boy") and Santa "posted" a present back (another comforter) which the child was excited to find in the mailbox. If you do this, throw out all the dummies, so there is no temptation to give in.