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Upon entry to school, many pupils encounter challenges in terms of their speech and language, so impacting on their ability to communicate in an age-appropriate way. Whilst there are many strategies to develop communication skills in children, one limiting factor can be a child's continued reliance on a 'dummy'.

Dummies



Does your child still use a dummy? Have you thought about ditching it?

Dummies can be a great tool to help comfort your baby in the early stages of life. However, the use of a dummy whilst children are learning to talk can affect a child's speech and language development. Dummy use, especially beyond about 4-5 years of age, also increases the chance of dental problems later in childhood – for example, the problem of a child's teeth growing out of line.

How to ditch the dummy

There are different ways to approach discontinuing dummy use and it is your decision which way you go about it. Once you have decided, it is important to remain firm and consistent with your decision for your child to adjust to the change without getting confused.

Some parents prefer to gradually wean their child off the dummy; this can be done by beginning to offer the dummy at nap and bedtime only, before eventually removing it completely. Other parents feel that the gradual approach may confuse their baby and so decide to remove it completely.

Here are some general tips you may wish to consider:

- Offer something else as a comforter in place of the dummy: this can be a specific teddy or a small blanket.



- Once your child is asleep, remove their dummy- if they wake, try to comfort them without giving them back the dummy.
- Remove dummies from the home or keep them out of sight.
- Never let your child babble or talk with the dummy in their mouth, this will stop them from learning to speak clearly.
- Depending on their age and level of understanding, you can prepare your child for what's going to happen. For example, you might say: *"Tomorrow we're going to say bye-bye to dummy because you're a big boy/girl now."*
- You can ask your child to collect all their dummies into a bag and then leave them out for the fairies/Easter bunny/Santa to collect. You can leave a small gift to replace the dummies
- Give your child praise and encouragement, and if they haven't mentioned the dummy, try not to remind them.
- You may want to use an incentive such as a sticker chart to show your child how well they're doing.
- If your child asks for the dummy, you can either explain to them that they can only have it at sleep times or that we don't have the dummy anymore. You can also use distraction by quickly diverting their attention to playing and having fun.

Consistency is key. Once you have decided to ditch the dummy, you and all those who care for your little one must stay consistent.

Please use the following website to find out further information:

<https://healthforunder5s.co.uk/sections/toddler/top-tips-for-ditching-the-dummy/>

<https://www.lets-talk.scot.nhs.uk/tips-and-info/top-tips/babies-and-dummies>

Thank you,

Mrs Mackenzie

