

## Speech and Language Therapy

# Dummies and their effect



### Are dummies useful?

For babies with feeding difficulties, and for very unsettled babies, dummies can be very helpful in soothing the child, teaching them to suck and reducing sensitivity in the mouth.

### Can dummies be harmful?

If your child regularly uses a dummy, you should be aware of the following.

- A dummy may affect your child's speech and language development.
- A dummy may affect your child's teeth.
- If your child falls with a dummy in his/her mouth, it may cause damage.
- Dummies must always be clean and replaced if worn or damaged.

### What if a child uses a dummy for too long?

- A dummy may result in teeth being distorted - this may mean dental treatment in the future.
- A dummy prevents the tongue from moving around - tongue movements are vital for speech sounds.

### When should a child stop using their dummy?

Try to wean your child off the dummy when he/she is about one year old, or as you wean him/her off a bottle.

You can do it gradually, or at a significant point, such as a birthday.

Children who have a dummy after the age of 18 months to two years no longer need it as a comforter. It may have become a habit.

### The longer you leave it the harder it will be.

### How should dummies be used?

- Always remove the dummy if your child tries to talk.
- Have only one dummy in use.
- Only use it for a few minutes to settle the child.
- Sterilise the dummy before use - don't put it in your mouth.
- Wait until your child asks for the dummy instead of automatically giving it to him/her.

Other useful information: [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk) offers plenty of useful information about speech, language and communication development.