

Get rid of that dummy!

Giving up may be hard

Your child will not want to give their dummy up. However, a dummy can create arched teeth, affect your child's speech development and interfere with their ability to chat. There are lots of ways to get rid of that dummy – the best is to find out what works for you and your child.

Talk to your child

If you feel your child is ready to give up their dummy for good or they are old enough to understand this then talk to them about it.

- pick a time when your child is relaxed and happy
- don't nag your child. You will only cause distress
- tell them you think they are grown up enough to do without a dummy
- as the dummy is phased out, another comfort item (such as a teddy or special blanket) could be chosen to use instead

Decide on your strategy

You can get rid of the dummy quickly or slowly.

Quickly

- simply throw the dummy away
- having a little ceremony involving the child might be helpful
- be firm and gently remind that they don't need their dummy anymore
- try to distract them with other activities to help soothe and relax them

Slowly

- only let your child use the dummy at certain times, such as going to bed, when upset

- your child could put their dummy in a special place every morning, where it stays
- be firm – it's hard at first but becomes easier over time

Use a reward system

Toddlers respond well to praise and encouragement. You could also use a 'sticker' chart to reward them for not using their dummy. Praise them often on their new behaviour and tell them how proud you are.

Resisting the change

Comfort objects can gradually become a habit as children approach school age, but children can

also look for them when they are stressed. If your child seems upset without their dummy, they may simply be tired or you may need to encourage them to use their words to tell you what is bothering them. Remember that change can take time.

Other things parents have tried

- give the dummy to Santa/Easter Bunny/Dummy fairy
- swap the dummy for a gift/cuddly toy/new toothbrush
- pretend to give the dummy to a friend's baby
- get the child to throw the dummy in the bin
- take your dummy to a charity shop – pretend to send it to children who will need that dummy more
- create a 'dummy hotel' from a box to put your dummy in to keep safe

Remember:

Never talk to your child when they have a dummy in their mouth, ask them to take it out first.

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net