Children and Family Health Surrey

Use of Dummies

The benefits:

Babies like to suck, so dummies can help soothe at bedtime or when your baby is tired or cross.

The drawbacks:

Regular and prolonged use of dummies can lead to a range of problems which can have a long term impact on speech development, including:

 Delayed speech and language development dummies can stop your child experimenting with making sounds and using words which may mean they are late in leaming to talk.

* Tooth damage — continuous sucking on a dummy can cause your child's teeth to grow differently (an 'open bite'). This can have an effect on their speech sound development.
* The baby is unable to engage tn normal babble pattems as the dummy restricts tongue

movements.

* Increased dribbling as the child is prevented from sealing their lips.
* The child becomes reliant on the dummy and it becomes increasingly difficult to wean them off as they get older. This can result in stress for both child and parent.
* Increased risk of middle ear infections (otitis media). This is because sucking opens the eustachian tube, which links the nose and middle ear.

Dummy recommendations:

 Try to wean your child away from the dummy, preferably by 12 months.

 When your baby cries they are trying to tell you something, so try to find out what's upsetting them first, and use the dummy as the last resort.

 Whilst your child is using a dummy, use it as little as possible and try other means of comforting your child, such as cuddling or reading to your child at bed time.

 Dummies prevent babies from babbling — an important step in leaming to talk, so only use them at set times, like bedtime.

 Don't allow your child to talk with a dummy in their mouth; it stops tongue and lip movement.

 Make a clean break — throw away the dummy at a time when you have support. Most babies and toddlers will fret for no more than two or three days.

 Once you have decided to give the dummy up, don't be tempted to give it backs and make sure there are none left around.

For advice on using dummies with vety young babies please speak to your Midwife or Health Visitor. Further advice and research findings can be found at:

* www.nhs.uk/conditions/preqnancy-and-baby/paqes/qettinq-babv-to-sleep.aspx
* https://ican.orq.uk/i-cans-talkinq-point/parents/do-dummies-affect-speech/