

## Teething tips

Teething can be distressing for some babies, but there are ways to make it easier for them. Every baby is different, and you may have to try a few different things until you find something that works for your baby.

### Teething toys

Teething toys give your baby something to chew safely. This may ease their discomfort and distract them from any pain.

Some teething toys can be cooled first in the fridge, which may help to soothe your baby's gums.

### Pain relief

If your baby is in pain, consult your GP, health visitor or dental professional for appropriate pain relief that will be suitable for your child.



Improving Oral Health in  
Evermore Communities



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# Dummies, Thumb Sucking and Teething Tips



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## Oral health

Baby teeth (primary teeth) are important in guiding the adult (permanent) teeth into the correct position. Using a dummy may push teeth out of position causing problems for the adult teeth. Research shows that children who use dummies for prolonged periods of time are more likely to need orthodontic treatment when they are older. Under no circumstances should a dummy be dipped in sugary substances as this can lead to tooth decay.

## Dummies

Whether or not to offer a dummy is a parents' decision. Suckling is a baby's earliest reflex and can soothe and calm them when they are distressed. However, it can become a difficult habit to change for older babies and children.

### Using a dummy

- To be used when a baby is distressed to 'pacify' them.
- Avoid dummy use until breast feeding is established.
- Aim to give up the dummy by 6 months - dummy use can delay speech development
- Evidence suggests dummy use can increase the risk of middle ear infections.

## Tips on giving up the dummy

### Take it away early

It is recommended to discourage the use of a dummy from six months onwards.

### Take it away gradually

Restricting usage to specific times or places is often the first step.

### Replace with something else

Using another form of comfort will allow an easier transition to breaking the habit.

### Read books about it

Reading can be used with children to inspire and promote desirable behaviours.

### Leave it for someone special

Magical people may help your child make the transition to a dummy free existence. e.g. the Tooth Fairy, Easter Bunny or a Christmas Elf.

### Give it away

Giving or trading the dummy for something special, e.g. a toy or a day out.

## Thumb sucking

A child may also find comfort by sucking their thumb or fingers.

Thumb sucking can also affect teeth and speech, especially if it continues when the adult teeth come through around the age of six.

Thumb sucking can cause a gap to develop between the front teeth, making eating difficult. It can cause the top teeth to protrude and the lower teeth to jut in, thus affecting speech.

### Giving up? Try:

- Rewards and positive reinforcements (avoid food).
- A nail biting solution could be considered from the age of 3 (to be applied to the nail only), the bitter taste may put them off.

If a child over six years old is unable to stop then a dental professional can advise on appropriate measures to prevent thumb sucking.

