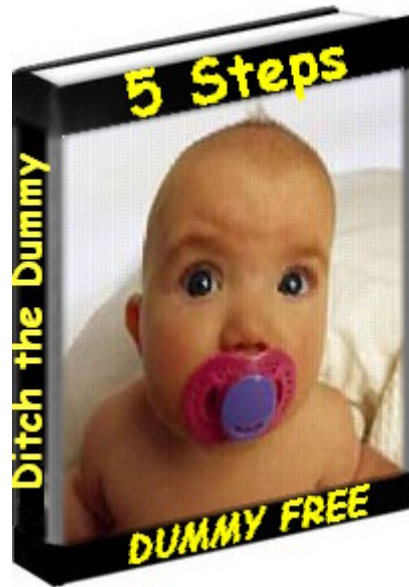


“Ditch the Dummy in only 5 Easy Steps”

by Sally Neill



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Babies have a natural sucking reflex so pacifiers / dummies are a great source of comfort for them.

Many Health Professionals believe that dummy use should be restricted from around six months of age and that the use of a dummy or pacifier has ended by the age of one, however as children differ age is not set in stone.

Now you will have different reasons as you want your child to ditch their dummy, here are a few important reasons you may not be aware of:

Increased ear infections: There is a proven link between prolonged dummy use and ear infections. Sucking on a dummy increases the chance of an infection back tracking from the mouth into the Eustachian tube (the narrow channels that run between the ears and the throat). Children's tubes are very small and can easily get blocked.

Link to stomach and other infections: Dummies can harbour many germs therefore they pose a risk to your child suffering from symptoms such as vomiting, fever, diarrhoea and colic..

Dental problems: Dummies / Pacifiers can lead to teeth growth and development, especially if your child is still using their dummy when they have their adult / permanent / second set of teeth. Always try to at least use an orthodontic one available from most chemists and baby stores etc.

Speech impediments: You should always remove the dummy from your child's mouth when they speak and try to get them to speak more rather than keep pointing at various items or objects.

Remember all the times your child whined or cried, and they were given the dummy / pacifier.

They were programmed to learn that when they were upset this was part of the way they were comforted.

Now we are going to kind of "de-programme" them to thinking that they don't need this any longer.

Just think if you have to give something up you love, its not fun is it????

So as a parent you will have to take several steps to achieving this goal for your child.

Ok, lets get rid of that dummy, FOREVER !

Step 1 : Involve your Child

Don't just turn up one day and snatch the dummy / soother / pacifier from their mouth or hand.

The trick is to make your child feel involved every step of the way and to let them feel that it is partly their decision too!

So sit them down, make sure you are at eye level with them, and speak softly, clearly and slowly so they understand.

Simply explain that as they are getting older, now that they are a big boy or girl, etc you know how to speak to your child so use whichever term you feel appropriate and at ease with, that its time they didn't use their dummy pacifier all the time.

Don't say never, they will be told that in later steps.

Now you may be met by screams of "no" "no" "no" or tantrums and tears but don't make an issue of it, this is a good sign that they understood you and know what lies in the future for them and their dummy.

You will re-iterate this point to them at least once every day, no more is needed, too much pressure on your child will not help achieve their dummy free life.

There is no set time scale in your task, patience is a virtue and you will need your patience as anger never gets the right results.

Step 2 : Slowly Wean Your Child off the Dummy

In order for your child to give up their dummy or pacifier, you will have to remove the habit that has formed in their mind.

You have to get your child used to the idea of not having their dummy / pacifier and you have to let your child see that they can cope without the dummy, in fact they will see they can be happy without the dummy at all.

Now you are going to have the patience of a saint, there are testing times ahead but you have to be strong for your child. As a parent you are responsible for teaching them and guiding them to a happy and healthy life, they are totally dependant on you.

Now its up to you which way you would like to perform this step.

a) You can choose a certain time of the day, say 9am until 10am, when no matter what happens your child wont get their dummy, you don't tell your child that this is the case, instead if they are upset or crying you are going to use your skills to comfort them in other ways, you know what comforts you child but don't use the dummy.

b) You could just remove the dummy whenever the child seems uninterested in using it, ie. anytime you see the dummy / pacifier you will take it away, out of sight out of mind they say. Often when the child sees the dummy they immediately want it, so removing it from their eyesight is n excellent way to take their mind off it.

c) Pretend to your child that the dummy is lost. Then make a game of finding it, obviously you wont find out, instead you will use this opportunity to distract their attention and focus it on something else. Find a toy, book, when you are looking for the dummy.

d) Your own way! Each and every child has different needs and behaviours. Obviously you know what your child needs, if you think of another way then use that, my steps only worked for my little girl and are just guidelines for you and your child.

Another good tip is never let your child have a favourite dummy now, always change it to a new one, different colour etc, we don't want them familiar with any dummy.

Step 3 : Alternative methods of comfort

Up until now your child has used their dummy or pacifier for comfort. So now they need an alternative to comfort.

Obviously we are not going to bribe them or buy them gifts, we are not swapping a dummy or pacifier for something else they will have to give up. Your child is upset and needs comfort from you.

Imagine how you feel when your upset, maybe frustrated, hurt or angry.

Try to imagine how your child feels.

Communication is an excellent way of finding out why they are upset so you can therefore remedy the situation, so ask them why they are upset, make sure you ask in a soft voice tone and have direct eye contact with them.

Touch them, its very comforting to know someone is there for you when your upset, especially when you're a child, give them a hug, hold their hand, sit them on your knee etc, show them you care.

Distract them, we all know how to distract our child from their upset frame of mind. Maybe take them into the bathroom and run the water, children love running water, even let them put their hands or feet in it or read them their favourite story, you know what will distract them.

If all else fails and your child will only respond to the dummy or pacifier, then give them it, we haven't got to the step where they have dumped that dummy !

Step 4 : Leave the house without a dummy or pacifier

Don't Panic ! It won't be that bad. If this fills you with dread don't let it. Just take little steps at a time, I don't mean go out for a whole day without the dummy, start off little but aim big!

A trip to the swing park, feeding the ducks, take them swimming, anything that will amuse your child and show them that they don't need a dummy to have happy and good times.

Gradually you will increase the time that you are out the house without the dummy, observe your child when you are out, remember the time it took for them to ask for their dummy, or start to need it. This will help you avoid any screaming matches and those strained looks from other people.

By the way, never mind what other people think, your child is upset and they are your priority, not the disapproving look of some strangers.

Restrict dummy use to key times during the day, such as bedtime or when your child is unwell.

Reward your child with fun activities, or stickers charts, but not sweets or candy!

When you are out make sure you point out any other boys or girls who are not using a dummy, it will make them feel more grown up.

You are aiming to get your child used to large amounts of time without their dummy,

This will help when you both take the final step in ditching the dummy.

Step 5: Ditching the Dummy FOREVER

Ok the time has come, can you say yes to all of the following statements.

1. You have gradually decreased the amount of time your child uses their dummy, i.e they can go for long periods of time without using it.
2. Your child is aware that they will be giving up their dummy.
3. You are confident that you can comfort your child when they are distressed without the use of a dummy

Yes? Great, then you are ready.

One final step, as a grand gesture, you can have a pretend ceremony for your child to get rid of their dummy, the purpose of this is to let your child see that the Dummy is gone, forever and never to return.

My daughter loves Fairies, so the fairies came one night and took her dummy for a little baby fairy.

One person I know tied their child's dummy to a helium filled balloon and let it float away up in the clouds, gone forever !

Another of my friends gave her child's dummy to the Bin Man, Trash Man and he threw it in the back of the Trash / Bin Lorry.

It is important that your child knows the dummy is gone, and they see that it is never coming back.

ONE LAST THING REMEMBER THAT ONCE THE GRAND GESTURE HAS BEEN DONE, AND THE DUMMY IS GONE, IT CAN NEVER RETURN!

BE PATIENT, BE STRONG AND NEVER GIVE IN.

YOUR CHILD CAN AND WILL GROW OUT OF THEIR DEPENDANCY OF A DUMMY.

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