

WEANING YOUR CHILD OFF THE DUMMY

The probability that a dummy will have harmful effects increases:

- in line with the degree of unsuitability of the dummy in terms of shape and material used.
- according to how long the child uses the dummy for (how many hours per day and how many years the habit continues).

When a child starts speaking, this is a good time to reduce their use of the dummy. Otherwise the dummy will become a habit as the child gets older. They should be completely weaned off the dummy at some point during their second year of life, at the latest. If the dummy has already caused some misalignment, it may be that this will right itself without intervention if the child stops using the dummy as soon as possible. Do you have any questions on this subject? Your dentist will be happy to help.

Dummy fairy, dummy tree, books...

It is entirely possible to wean your child off the dummy in a gentle way, without any big dramas. Often the dummy becomes a thing of the past much more quickly than feared. Whichever method you and your child decide to go for, be sure to choose a suitable time.

Experience has shown that carefully planning the process of weaning your child off the dummy and discussing it with them brings the greatest chances of success.



We're always here to help

If you have any questions, we're always very happy to help.

The Working Group for Dental Health

Your local point of contact:

Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Zahngesundheit Baden-Württemberg e.V.

Heßbrühlstraße 7
70565 Stuttgart
Tel.: +49 711 222 966-17
E-Mail: info@lagz-bw.de



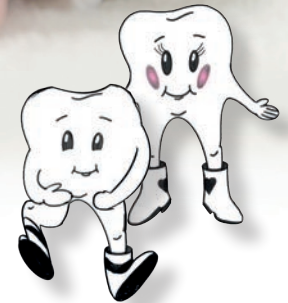
www.lagz-bw.de

Published by: Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Zahngesundheit Baden-Württemberg e.V.
Editors: Carolin Möller-Scheib (LAGZ BW), Alexandra Theurer (LAGZ BW), Sibylle Wilczek (RAGZ Heidelberg), Dr. Uwe Niekusch (RAGZ Heidelberg), Manuela Bendel-Schilp (RAGZ Heilbronn), Sonja Schmid (RAGZ Tübingen), Dr. Dietmar Pommer (RAGZ Tuttlingen), Natalya Huxmann (RAGZ Rastatt)
Design: Bruno Hentschel
Version: August 2024
Photo credits: Sybille Wilczek (RAGZ Heidelberg), istockphoto.com
Illustrations: Heike Zuschke



DUMMIES

Information for parents and guardians



Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Zahngesundheit Baden-Württemberg e.V.

Dear parents and guardians,

Even when still in the womb, babies start to develop their sucking reflex, which ensures their survival by allowing them to feed from their mother's breast. For some babies, suckling from the breast or bottle is not enough and they may need a dummy or thumb to suck on.

What happens in a child's mouth with PROLONGED USE OF A DUMMY?

If the dummy stays in the child's mouth for long periods, it can be a contributing factor to misalignment of the jaw or teeth. A typical misalignment of the jaw and teeth is an open bite where the front teeth do not meet.



Open bite with incorrect position of the tongue, caused by intensive use of a dummy

A dummy can also be responsible for speech disorders, a tendency to breathe through the mouth and dysfunctions of the swallowing mechanism. It can impact the entire oral musculature and can have a long-term adverse effect on its development.

DUMMY: YES OR NO?

Intensive and prolonged use of a dummy is also inadvisable from an orthodontic or speech development perspective. A dummy is not needed for healthy child development.

If a baby is restless, it doesn't always need a dummy. Try to avoid reaching for a dummy as the go-to method of calming your child. In many cases, a little love and attention or physical contact may be enough. Carrying your baby or breastfeeding them may also work just as well.

IF YOU DO USE A DUMMY, HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- Use it in moderation: as little as possible, only as much as you need to.
- Remove the dummy once the baby has fallen asleep.
- Introduce dummy-free times, e.g. when baby is playing, eating or talking.
- The dummy should not be available all the time so avoid attaching it to items of clothing.
- Only offer a dummy once breastfeeding is well-established.



A DUMMY SHOULD:

- not be a one-size-fits-all for a range of ages – always use the smallest possible size.
- have a very thin teat (the part that lies between the lips).
- be made of a soft material.
- be lightweight (less than 10 grams).



Cherry-shaped dummy with a thick teat



Cherry-shaped dummy with a thick teat, made of a sturdy material



Dummy with a thin, angled teat



Symmetrical dummy with a thin teat

