

Dummies /Pacifiers



Using a dummy when putting your baby down to sleep might reduce the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). If you choose to use a dummy, it is recommended that you consider offering it once breastfeeding has been established, typically when your baby is about one month old. Some people like to use a dummy as babies find sucking a soothing thing to do.

If you choose to use a dummy, wait until breastfeeding is well established, which can take a few weeks. Breastfeeding is good for you and your baby

There are different shapes of dummies available. Orthodontic dummies are sometimes used for premature babies to help establish good sucking.

If you have chosen to use a dummy, it should be gently withdrawn between 6 and 12 months, to avoid possible longer-term problems associated with dummy use (such as ear infections or misalignment of teeth). These problems have not been found below the age of one year.

Stop giving a dummy to your baby between 6 and 12 months

If you use a dummy it is best to offer it consistently, giving the dummy at the beginning of every sleep both in the day and at night. It has been found that only using the dummy for some sleeps may not be as effective in reducing the chance of SIDS.

If you use a dummy, make sure to offer it to your baby for every day and night-time sleep

Do not force your baby to take the dummy if they do not want it. If your baby spits the dummy out during their sleep there is no need to keep putting it back in. You shouldn't put anything sweet, such as honey (which should never be given to babies under a year), on your baby's dummy to encourage them to take it, or use it during awake time. Never use a dummy with a neck cord or other attachments.

Don't force your baby to take a dummy or put it back in if your baby spits it out.

Don't use a neck cord. Don't put anything sweet on the dummy, and don't offer during awake time. Remember, consistency is the key, so if you choose to use a dummy, make sure it's part of your baby's regular sleep and nap routine.



Research corner

Regular use of a dummy (also known as a 'pacifier' or 'soother' has been found in several studies to be associated with a lower risk of SIDS, although it is not clear exactly why this is. Research has also found that if an infant who is accustomed to dummy use is not given one on a particular occasion, the degree of protection may be less than during sleep periods when a dummy is given. Therefore, if a baby uses a dummy as part of their general routine, it should be given for every sleep period.

Frequently asked questions



Why does using a dummy reduce the chance of a baby dying suddenly?

We do not know exactly what it is about a dummy that may help reduce the chance of a baby dying of SIDS. As with most of the safer sleep information, we only know that there is good evidence to show what you can do to reduce the chance of SIDS, and what increases the chance and should be avoided.

Does my baby need to use a dummy every day?

Regular dummy use is the best way to use a dummy. This means offering your baby a dummy each time you put them down for a sleep, day or night. You and your baby will also find it easier to have a regular sleep routine. If the dummy falls out of your baby's mouth during sleep, there is no need to put it back in.

Will using a dummy make breastfeeding more difficult?

If you choose to use a dummy, only introduce it once you have established breastfeeding. The time this takes differs for each person, but it could be a few weeks. Make sure you get help if you need it. Once breastfeeding is established, introducing a dummy should not have a negative effect.

What do I do if my paediatrician has recommended I use a dummy, but I have not properly established breastfeeding with my baby?

There are some situations in which babies are given dummies by medical professionals when breastfeeding has not been established:

1. As a general comforter for babies, it may be helpful to provide a dummy when they are receiving procedures or when on ventilators
2. It can also help to develop some facial muscles in premature babies as they learn to suck
3. For babies receiving a certain kind of ventilation called CPAP, a dummy helps to keep their mouths closed and to maintain pressure in their airways.

The Lullaby Trust recommends that parents follow health professional advice in these situations.

What if my baby won't take a dummy?

Not all babies like using dummies. If your baby repeatedly refuses a dummy, do not force them to take it. Some studies have suggested that finger or thumb-sucking may give a similar benefit, but even if your baby does not do this, following other safer sleep advice such as not smoking and placing your baby to sleep on their back will still significantly lower their chance of SIDS.

