



Dummies/Pacifiers

A dummy is a brilliant tool for settling a newborn baby who just wants to suck. Sucking can be very soothing and calming for your baby, and a dummy can help give mum's breasts a little break throughout the day or avoid the hassle of preparing extra bottle feeds.

It's important not to use a dummy to stretch out feeds too much in the early weeks, if breastfeeding is being established. Breastfeeding relies on feeding on demand to establish milk supply, and in the early days, your baby will want and need to feed frequently.

Overuse of a dummy may also lead to nipple confusion in the early days, as your baby gets the hang of the style of sucking required to breastfeed.

Newborn babies do need to feed fairly frequently, so if your baby is giving hungry signs at the 2-2.5 hour mark, go ahead and feed them instead of using the dummy. However if it has been just an hour since they had a full feed, but it looks like baby is cueing that they are hungry, they are possibly just tired (check their awake time), so using the dummy to help them settle off to sleep might be helpful.

HOW to introduce a dummy (once feeding is established) and WHY

- Helpful to allow baby to suckle when unsettled, especially while they can't yet coordinate their hands well enough to steadily suck on them
- Can help with excess wind and therefore with more settled sleep and extending naps easier
- Using a dummy instead of feeding (when baby not hungry, just wants to relax) means as well that feeds will be bigger and more filling, rather than snacking
- Great for car trips, supermarket shops and other emergency situations, when baby gets desperate and unsettled (sometimes due to a feed). A dummy can give a little relief, until there is time to calm in other ways i.e. by feeding
- Non-nutritional sucking can be helpful with reflux & colic babies, as it supports saliva production, reduces acid, triggers the calming reflex and avoids potential over feeding, which often causes colic & reflux symptoms to rather worsen.

Do's & Don'ts

- Wait for feeding to be established (good latch, good milk supply) from around 2 weeks +
- If baby is bottle fed, dummies can be used pretty much introduced straight away
- Avoid to use a dummy instead of feeding. If baby is unsettled and it has been 2-3 hours since last feed, don't use the dummy, feed baby
- A dummy is great for helping baby to settle (i.e. when over tired) and to calm down to sleep --> if you don't want to keep the dummy much longer than during the newborn phase (12 weeks +), only use it as a back-up option, rather than a go to (to avoid strong sleep association) + avoid using the dummy to extend sleeps (dummy runs)
- if baby is used to the dummy and you want to phase it out, replace it with a firm shush- pat, darkness and white noise

Dummies can become a deeply ingrained sleep association if their use is continued past the newborn stages: the younger the baby, the easier it is to wean them off it.

Beyond 3 months, your baby may not be as receptive to patting as a replacement, and sleep training may be necessary to help your baby learn to fall asleep without the dummy. The dummy generally becomes a problem, once you as the parent find yourself doing the "dummy runs" aka your baby wakes up looking for it to be replaced mid nap or overnight, whenever a sleep cycle ends.

Using a dummy successfully with 3-6 months old babies

- can still be helpful with lingering reflux/colic
- use in emergency situations only (4 months old babies can be easily overwhelmed due to lots of development and still learning to self- soothe)
- if wanting to keep long-term: use for 1- 2 sleeps a day only or as back- up/ emergency only, while still allowing baby to practice their self- soothing skills + learning to connect sleep cycles
- when sleep training and phasing out, dummy can help keeping baby calm during PUPD/ Shush pat
- can help with changing a strong feeding to sleep association

Phasing out/ removing as a sleep association

- 3-6 months is a good age to remove the dummy, if not desired to be kept long term
- Replace dummy with shush pat as a new association
- Encourage self-soothing skills
- It will usually only take a few days for your baby to forget that they ever had it, if you have a consistent approach

From about 6 months of age, teaching your baby to find and replace their own dummy is an achievable goal (but keep in mind most can't do this consistently until about 8 months of age). Younger than this and the best option is likely going to be to ditch the dummy and teach self-settling without it by using an alternative settling method that you use consistently.

- 6- 8 months (baby more strong willed + more persistent cry) it becomes harder to remove dummy, cold turkey might take 3- 5 days (up to 1 week) to stop crying for it
- > if keeping it is the right choice for your family, practise to find & replace: hand dummy and guide it to their mouth, attach to a cuddly/ have several in the cot
- if sleep training with an in-room methods you can still use it to calm, but aim for using it less and less
 - if an out of the room methods is used, it's best to take the dummy away, if you do not want to keep it in the long run.

At 8-9 months old your baby will have formed a strong attachment to their dummy and I often recommend to teach find & replace, rather than taking it away, and wait until toddler/preschool age (2-4 years old) to say goodbye, as at this age children will have more cognitive understanding & increasing impulse control.

This of course depends on your preferences as the parent and your priorities around weaning your child off it.

Key factors when keeping dummy

- teach them to find & replace
- if it becomes a game (throwing out of cot), wait to give it back for a few minutes and then just put it close by in their cot, rather than handing it directly to them

Removing the dummy from ages 2+

- Make sure child understands rewards and has established ways on how to regulate their emotions a bit better --> if not quite there yet, just leave it a few months longer
- Put a plan in place, rather than playing it by ear
- Don't make it a big deal when child asks again for it or is upset. Help them to calm, acknowledge their feelings, but explain that it's all gone and distract 😊