

# The Children's Doctor



## How to ditch the dummy ....

A dummy or pacifier can be a useful tool for helping your baby to learn to self-settle. There is an ongoing debate about the pros and cons of dummy use. There is no argument that babies find sucking soothing. It can help to relax an infant and settle an infant to sleep. In this case, the infant does not require milk necessarily and sometimes excessive milk can give the infant a tummy ache. Using a dummy may allow your infant and you to experience a good night's sleep. Dummies can, however, be more trouble than they are worth. This can occur if the infant continually loses the dummy and requires the parent to replace the dummy. If this is happening, both the infant and the parent have an interrupted sleep pattern and can become exhausted!

Having started using a dummy, when is the best time to get rid of it? Certainly if your infant is demanding the dummy be replaced more than once overnight then it is worth settling without the dummy. In this instance, your child is too young to reason with and it is best to just throw the dummy away so that you are not tempted to give in at midnight. However, if your child is happy with the dummy and it is helping her to sleep then there is actually no hurry to dispose of it. Rather than removing the dummy altogether, the first step is to make sure the dummy stays in your baby's bed. If the baby wants the dummy during the day, she can hop into bed and have it but the dummy doesn't come out of the bed. She will soon give up on lying in bed!! When your baby is old enough to be rational, you can trade up the dummy. That is, you may give the dummy to Santa and in return, Santa may give the child a wonderful new cuddly toy to take to bed instead. This can be arranged in person using a department store Santa and a little skilful deception by the parents. Alternatively, you may choose to give the dummy to a new baby and, in return, give your child a new toy to replace the dummy. Most children are ready for this type of negotiation by three and a half years of age.

Whenever and however you decide to ditch the dummy, the most important rule is to not give in and replace the dummy or the battle will be so much harder the next time!