

Healthy Living

Under 2's - What we need to know about Dummies



Dummies/pacifiers can be a great tool to use in our childcare settings especially when providing comfort and helping children self-soothe during transitions. However, as early years practitioners it is crucial that we are aware of best practices around their use and the potential impact they can have on a child's speech and language and oral health. By staying informed, ensuring consistent practices and communicating with parents, we can support a child's health and wellbeing as well as creating an effective and nurturing environment for the children we care for.

TASK 1

As a team, divide the links below between you to explore. Once you have had time to review them, come together to discuss your key findings:

[Reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome \(SIDS\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[How Thumb Sucking and Dummies Affect Teeth \(bupa.co.uk\)](https://bupa.co.uk)

[Dental care for mother and baby - Oral Health Foundation \(dentalhealth.org\)](https://dentalhealth.org)

[Tips for ditching the dummy | Toddler | Health for Under 5s](#)

[Dummies and SIDS - The Lullaby Trust](#)

[How to transition away from a dummy and bottle \(derbyshirefamilyhealthservice.nhs.uk\)](https://derbyshirefamilyhealthservice.nhs.uk)

[BabiesAndDummies.pdf](#)

TASK 2

Reflect on the following questions in relation to your own practice, discuss with your team:

- What are some common reasons why babies and young children use dummies?
- How can dummies provide comfort and support the emotional regulation in babies and young children?
- What are the practical benefits of using dummies, and how might they support a child's development?
- How might prolonged dummy use impact a child's speech and language development?
- In what ways can a dummy affect a child's teeth and oral health?
- What hygiene considerations should be considered when using dummies?
- What guidance do you provide parents with about the safe use of dummies (e.g. avoiding sugar coating and using dummy clips safely?).
- How do you as a setting support families in making informed choices about dummy use?
- At what age do you think it is appropriate to begin reducing dummy use and why?
- What strategies can parents and practitioners use to help children stop using dummies in a sensitive and supportive way? Consider how you can work closely with families to ensure a child is ready to transition away from using a dummy.

TASK 3

Read the case study below.

Charlie is 14 months old and has been using a dummy since birth. His parents encourage it's use throughout the day, particularly when he is playing and when settling to sleep. They believe it soothes him and prevents him from becoming upset. His key worker, Jeevan has noticed that Charlie is quieter than his peers. Whilst the other children have started to babble and are experimenting with sounds, Charlie rarely vocalises, even during interactions. If his dummy is removed on arrival to nursery, he becomes very distressed and takes a long time to settle. Jeevan has observed during pickups that his parents quickly return it to him even if he is settled and happy.

Consider the questions below:

- How might you sensitively discuss your observations with Charlie's parents?
- What strategies could you implement in your setting to support Charlie's speech?
- How will you further support Charlie to settle at nursery, giving time and consideration to his emotional wellbeing? What other strategies might you try?
- How might you encourage Charlie's parents to work in partnership with you around Charlie's use of his dummy?
- Do your existing policies and procedures support you in this scenario, or would it be helpful to strengthen the information captured and provide further clarity around expectations?

TASK 4

Having a dummy/pacifier policy can be beneficial for childcare settings as it can provide you with a consistent approach to dummy use whilst balancing children's individual needs, parental preferences and best practices for oral health and speech and language development.

As a team, create or review your current dummy policy, consider the following:

- Does the policy support children's speech and language and emotional development?
- How does it reflect how you work with parents regarding the use of a dummy?
- Are there any changes or improvements that could be made?