

Non-Nutritive Sucking Cessation

Thumb, Fingers, Pacifier, Binky

Why the Worry?



malocclusion / overbite damage from thumb sucking

Great question! First, a bit of background. Every baby is born with the natural ability to perform the sucking motion, as that will be their only method for obtaining nourishment for the first several months of life. Additionally, being able to suck on a thumb can be a means for babies to self-soothe. The body is naturally equipped and prepared to perform this function as often as is necessary to make sure the baby can feed and grow. The body is not, however, equipped to deal naturally with the introduction of a thumb or other foreign object (i.e. Pacifier) to be sucked on for hours each day in the form of a non-nutritive sucking habit. The extended pressures caused by non-nutritive sucking can interfere with normal tooth eruption and even negatively impact jaw growth. The developing mouth is susceptible to

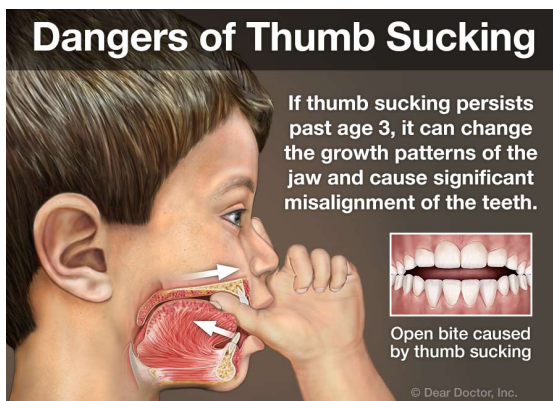
growth manipulation and is the reason an otherwise normal bite can transition into a flared Open Bite and/or a Posterior Crossbite (see images above).

When to Intervene? If at all possible, by age 3. It is important that we don't try to intervene too early, however, as we know most kiddos will stop this habit on their own by this age. Thankfully, in most cases, if the non-nutritive sucking habit ceases soon enough, the body should be able to auto-correct, allowing for the adult teeth to enter the mouth into their proper position.

How to Stop?

Once it is determined that intervention is required (i.e. your kiddo is not going to stop on their own), there are basically two methods that we recommend when trying to help your kiddo stop a non-nutritive sucking habit: 1) the use of a fixed orthodontic appliance, and 2) without orthodontic intervention. Using a fixed orthodontic appliance is highly successful, however it can be much more costly and at times can be avoided with a dedicated, consistent effort.

The second option, without using an orthodontic appliance, is our goal in working with your kiddo, and will be outlined below.



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First, it is absolutely essential that your kiddo become invested and excited about quitting. If they are not interested in stopping, then this more conservative approach might not work. Your first step is to help them become motivated to cease.

Once they have decided to quit, let them know how proud you are of their decision to quit. Positive reinforcement throughout the process is essential. To that end, our office will plan to celebrate your kiddo, once they quit, with a special balloon arrangement, a gift card for ice cream, and a picture with us that we will hang on the Wall of Heroes. If you believe it will help to keep your kiddo motivated, we also suggest you include a reward for their effort (Take them to their favorite store, and allow them to pick out a really important reward. Something big-time important to them. Something that they will for sure still want in a month or two (or six)).

Make a big deal about how excited you are for them to earn that reward. Put it on top of the refrigerator (or somewhere high where they will see it every day), just above the 30-day calendar (included below). This 30 day calendar needs to be at your child's height and is something you should visit with them every day. Each day that they refuse to suck their thumb or use a Pacifier, let them make a colorful "X" over that day. 30 days in a row, bring your kiddo and calendar into our office for that celebration (mentioned above) and then also earn that motivating reward they selected with you weeks prior (the one they have been looking at every day on the top of the refrigerator). Celebrate them again big-time...taking them out to eat at their favorite place, calling extended family members so that they can share the great news (of course prepare Grandma and Grandpa to have a super happy, big-time reaction).



Remember that at no time during this process, which might take weeks to months, do we want to punish or shame your child in any way; if you do, you might make the habit cessation that much more difficult for your kiddo to accomplish.

In the case of a thumb or finger sucking habit, as a reminder we encourage you to place a deterring polish on their thumb/finger nails. Specifically, we have seen great results with Mavala Stop (it has the just the right amount of Yucky...kiddos have a really tough time ignoring it). This deterrent is a reminder, not a punishment. If they think it is a punishment, they will hide that they've sucked on their finger, minimizing the polish's effect. If they know that it is

there to help them achieve their goal, once they've put it in their mouth they will remind you to put on a new coat. Again, the polish is super potent and highly effective, but only when applied multiple times throughout the day (after every accidental sucking, handwashing, etc...as many as 10 or more times per day). Keys regarding Pacifier cessation, when you ultimately take



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away the pacifier, make sure they do not switch to sucking on a thumb or finger. If you see that happening, it might be good to also place Mavala Stop on the nails.

30 DAY CHALLENGE

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30