

## Bottles, Cups and Dummies

Bottles and dummies are an important part of everyday life for many families with young babies for feeding, settling and soothing.

BUT it is important that your child's mouth has a chance to develop and grow without a dummy or bottle getting in the way. Helping them to move on from these, before their use becomes a habit, is really important.

Did you know that children who don't use bottles and dummies long term:

- Have better appetites
- Are more likely to develop healthy mouth muscles needed for speech
- Are less likely to experience dental problems as their second teeth come through
- Are less likely to suffer from ear or throat infections and tummy upsets

Also, SLTs; Dietitians; and Dentists recommend that children should start using open cups (a cup without a lid) from around 6 months (when weaning, or when able to sit up unsupported). Children who use open cups learn how to sip properly, have healthier teeth and develop strong mouth muscles necessary for learning to talk.



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### Moving on from bottles...

#### **From 12 months:**

Slowly reduce bottle use by only giving it at certain times of the day

or

Decide on a day to give up completely and stick to it.

#### **For older children:**

- 🍼 keep them busy - trips out or playing together will distract them from wanting their bottle
- 🍼 give motivating rewards for doing well – stickers, a trip to the park or a small toy
- 🍼 only give milk or water in bottles.
- 🍼 children shouldn't have a bottle to go to bed with – they will rely on it as part of their sleep routine and it can cause dental decay – always brush your child's teeth last thing before bed

### Moving on from dummies...

#### **From 6 months:**

Reduce dummy use to sleep / nap times and try and stop altogether by 12 months.

#### **For older children:**

- 🍼 Slowly reduce dummy use to certain times of the day
- or
- 🍼 Decide on a day to give up completely and stick to it – choose a time when things are as calm as possible at home – avoid stressful or busy times to make things easier
- 🍼 Keep them busy to distract them from thinking about their dummy.
- 🍼 Give dummies to the Easter Bunny; Father Christmas; bury them in the garden (plant something and watch it grow)
- 🍼 Give rewards – stickers, a small toy, trip to the park

### Moving on to open cups...

#### **From 6 months:**

- 🍷 Babies can start using open cups when weaning or able to sit up without support.
- 🍷 Choose the right cup – two-handled or sloping cups make it easy for little hands to hold and drink from.
- 🍷 Avoid cups with valves – they may be non-spill but they need to be bitten or sucked hard. If you use a cup with a lid make sure the liquid flows freely through the holes
- 🍷 Spills happen – be prepared! Put a small amount of liquid in the cup, there will be less to spill and a more manageable amount for them to drink. Clean any spills up calmly.
- 🍷 Keep a jug handy for topping up and a cloth for mopping up.

This leaflet has been adapted from *Bottles, Cups and Dummies: a practical guide for EY Settings* a publication developed by the Babcock LDP Early Years Team