

HOW DO I WEAN MY CHILD FROM THE PACIFIER?

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Parents frequently have questions about pacifiers and their children's teeth. While sucking behaviors are considered normal for infants and young children, prolonged sucking habits can have negative effects on your child's developing bite. Most of the **negative effects can be avoided if the child stops using their binky by age 3**. Sucking habits that are high in frequency, intensity, and duration are the most likely to cause changes to your child's bite. So even before you are ready to wean your child from their pacifier, do what you can to limit the intensity, frequency and duration of its use.

When you are committed and ready to wean your child from their pacifier, there are many approaches to consider. Here are a few of the best tactics: **1) weaning by degrees, 2) cold turkey, and 3) binky fairy/trade-off**, in that order. I give my highest recommendation to weaning by degrees.



Weaning by degrees works like this: gather all the pacifiers in the house, and cut the tip of each of them by 1-2 mm (hardly anything at all). It's important that you cut each of the binkies the same amount and here's why. When you hand your child their newly clipped binky, you may get an odd look back, and at this point you hand them another newly clipped binky and shrug your shoulders. This will help your child accept the "new normal" for the binky. Then, every 7-10 days, repeat the process, gather up all the pacifiers, and clip another 1-2 mm off. At this rate, it will take 4-6 weeks until there is nothing left to clip, but over the course of time, eventually, your child will begin to come to terms with their new reality. Over the same course of time as you are gradually clipping away, you may want to consider introducing another comfort item, like a stuffed animal or a blanket, to ease the transition away from the pacifier. This is generally the most successful approach.

Cold turkey is much simpler. Choose a day and time and simply throw away all the pacifiers in the house and buckle up as you ride it out. This can be very successful if you stick to it, but it can be tough for both parent and child. Trade-off is also simple. You can either let your child pick the item to trade for the binky or slip a new toy or doll under their pillow while they are sleeping. This tactic is not as predictable, mainly because other things don't generally have the same staying power as the binky. Whatever route you choose, stick to it and you will be successful. Oftentimes, it can be more challenging for the parents than the child.

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