

Giving up the pacifier (1–5 years)

Giving up the pacifier: Things to consider

As a parent, you're best placed to decide on the right time for the pacifier to go – it's your decision.

Sometimes children decide to give up their pacifiers by themselves. Most often, parents are the ones who decide. Try not to feel rushed or pressured by the reactions of family, other children or even strangers.

Your child is likely to have become very attached to the pacifier. Touching and sucking on the pacifier comforts and soothes your child. And like other attachment objects, pacifiers can help young children manage everyday stress in their lives.

But there comes a time when the pacifier has to go. Your child probably won't find it easy to part with. So, if you feel it's time for the pacifier to go, a gradual approach is the fairest and easiest.

Tips for giving up the pacifier

Here are some things you can do **before you begin to reduce your child's pacifier use**:

- Take some pressure off by reminding yourself that sucking a pacifier never becomes a lifelong habit. Many children will stop using a pacifier by themselves.
- Choose your timing. A period of change or stress for you or your child might not be a good time to give up.
- Talk to your child about giving up the pacifier, if your child is old enough to understand.

When you and your child are ready to begin, try these ideas:

- Limit how often your child has the pacifier for comforting during the day. For example, you may decide your child can use the pacifier once during the day, when she has her nap. You can put the pacifier in a special spot and only get it out when your child is using it.
- Limit the places your child has the pacifier – for example, you might decide your child can only have the pacifier when she is in the car or the cot. This gives your child a chance to get used to being without the pacifier.
- Gradually use the pacifier less and less when re-settling your child during the night. For example, give the pacifier to your child every second time she cries in the night on day two, then every third time on day three, and so on.

Once your child is coping for longer periods without the pacifier, set a time and date – then take away the pacifier. These ideas might help:

- **Mark the occasion** of becoming pacifier free with a celebration or special reward.

- **Try not to turn back.** No matter how well you've prepared your child for this change, expect some discomfort and some protest.