**Thumb & Finger Habits**

**Are these habits bad for the teeth and jaws?**

Most children stop sucking on thumbs, pacifiers or other objects on their own before age 5. However, some children repeatedly suck on a finger, pacifier or other object over long periods of time. In these children, the upper front teeth may tip toward the lip and it may cause the upper jaw growth to become constricted.

**When should I worry about a sucking habit?**

Dr. Amy will carefully watch the way your child’s teeth come in and jaws develop, keeping the sucking habit in mind at all times. Try to discourage habits by age 5, before permanent teeth begin to erupt.

**What can I do to stop my child’s habit?**

Most children stop sucking habits on their own, but some children need the help of their parents. We recommend starting with positive reinforcement utilizing a “thumb chart” with a reward for “good behavior”. You may also try a product, Mavala Stop, that you paint on the thumb or finger that has an unpleasant taste to help remind your child not to suck. There are also other items that are worn on the thumb or finger to help discourage the habit. Occasionally it may be necessary to utilize a habit appliance to remind your child to keep his/her thumb out of the mouth. The dentist will discuss this option with you.

**Products to try:**

**1. Mavala Stop ($8 @ amazon.com)**

**2. Thumb buster ($13 @ thumbusters.com)**

**3. Thumb or finger guard ($75 @ amazon.com or leapsandbounds.com)**

Are pacifiers a safer habit for the teeth than thumbs or fingers?

Thumb, finger and pacifier sucking all affect the teeth essentially the same way. However, a pacifier habit is often easier to break. Ideally, pacifier use should cease around the first birthday!



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