



MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

www.midjerseypeds.com

**33 Brunswick Woods Drive
East Brunswick, NJ 08816
(732) 257-4330**

**25 Kilmer Drive
Building #3, Suite 107
Morganville, NJ 07751
(732) 972-6888**

PACIFIERS AND THUMB SUCKING

Babies vary in how much extra sucking they do when they are not feeding. This extra sucking is a self-comforting behavior. The main advantage of the pacifier is that its use can be controlled and ultimately discontinued and discarded, unlike the thumb.

USE OF THE PACIFIER

- The peak age for use of a pacifier is 2-4 months of age, the sucking drive usually decreases over the following months.
- During the first 6 months, give it to your baby whenever they want to suck.
- After 6 months, keep it only in your child's crib. Restrict its use to naps and bedtime, or when he is ill or very upset.

STOPPING THE PACIFIER

If the pacifier's use has been restricted to nap time, many toddlers lose interest in it between 12 and 18 months. If your child continues to need the pacifier, introduce the idea to your child of giving it up by 2-3 years of age. Sometimes giving it up on a holiday or birthday makes it easier. Prepare your child before giving it up. This often makes the transaction easier. Sometimes having a ceremony to get rid of the pacifier, for instance leaving it out for the "pacifier fairy" is an easy and concrete way of making the transition.

THUMB SUCKING

- For those children who suck their thumb for comfort, 15% still stick their thumbs by 4 years of age.
- To overcome thumb sucking before the age of 4, try to distract him by giving him something to do with his hands. Don't mention the thumb sucking. Any pressure to stop will only lead to refusal and lack of cooperation. Scolding, slapping the hand or other punishment just makes your child more stubborn.
- After the age of 4, try to gain their commitment to give up sucking. Praise your child when he/she is not sucking his/her thumb. If it persists, tell the child to leave the room and do it in private. This makes the subconscious habit a conscious activity which is essentially boring. Rewarding the child for days spent without sucking may be helpful (stickers, "mini-manicures" for the girls).