



## Thumb Sucking



### Overview

This is a common habit for many babies and young children. Most often, thumb sucking isn't a problem. But if it continues for a long time, it can change the shape of the mouth as a child grows.

### Causes

Babies suck their thumbs, or fingers, because it makes them feel secure. It's a habit that sometimes begins while a baby is still in the womb. A child may do it while falling asleep, or when stressed. Most children grow out of thumb sucking between the ages of two and four. But some do it longer.

### Problems

When a child's permanent teeth start to come in, it's best to end thumb sucking. That's because it can begin to affect the shape of the roof of the mouth. It can also cause the teeth to shift out of their correct position.

### Conclusion

Thumb sucking is a habit that can be very hard to break. But you can encourage your child to stop by offering rewards and by helping them learn other ways to relax. There are also appliances that a dentist can mount inside a child's mouth to prevent thumb sucking. Your child's dentist or doctor can create a care plan that's right for you.

