

[How Can I Get My Child to Stop Sucking His Thumb?!](#)

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When my boys were born, it was so cute (and often helpful) to see them sucking on a pacifier or their thumb. My first son always used a pacifier, or binky as we called it. We spent some time worrying about his teeth and how we were going to get him to stop using his binky, and much to our surprise, he ended up doing it on his own. He threw his last one away when he was around three years old.

Then baby boy two came along. We were so relieved when he didn't want a binky. What a relief...no struggle to get him to stop sucking on a binky in our future. But, what he did start doing was sucking on his thumb. Little did we realize that this cute little action would be a harder challenge for all of us.

Here we are, our youngest is going to be five and we cannot get him to stop sucking his thumb. It is obvious in his teeth that he is a thumb sucker. They are already starting

to “move”. So, I do what I love to do...research and find out how we can help him to stop sucking his thumb, in a non-traumatic way, and possibly preventing future dental work.

I came across an article in the May issue of [Scholastic Parent & Child Magazine](#). It gave some great tips on ways to handle thumb-sucking. Like most other obstacles with children, we should be using positive reinforcement and distraction rather than admonishing him for sucking his thumb. It recommends occupying his hands at times when he sucks his thumb. Boredom can be a big cause, so try to keep their hands busy and their minds occupied.

Shari Green, C.O.M., I.A.O.M, Certified Orofacial Myologist, and more easily termed “the Thumb Lady” of [ThumbLady.com](#), states “Over 85% of children who suck their fingers and thumbs past age 4-5 may develop speech problems, tongue thrust swallows, and have flaccid weak tongues and lips.” She offers a program on her site that is based on behavior modification and positive reinforcement.

Babies begin sucking their thumbs because it is comforting and natural from the time they are born. If a child continues sucking his thumb, [Shari Green](#) states that “Childhood thumbsucking beyond age 5 is a **HABIT** — nothing more, nothing less. There comes a point in time when children truly want to stop, but often the habit has persisted for so long and is so ingrained, they cannot stop on their own.”

I would love to hear about your challenges and successes with thumb sucking. Leave a post...it may just help another parent!

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