



Gentle Help with Hand-Sucking

Hug a soft toy and find comfort during a small upset.

Helps Your Child Grow



Emotional Functioning

With an adult's help, choosing a comfort cloth or toy instead of sucking their hand gives your baby experience using another soothing action during waiting, separation, or uneasiness.

Steps

- Frequent finger-sucking is more than a hygiene concern; over time, it can affect the teeth and palate.
- For a baby, however, sucking is a natural way to self-soothe during boredom, tension, discomfort, or distress. Simply pulling the hand away does not address that need.
- When you notice the behavior, first check whether your baby is physically uncomfortable and respond to that cause.
- If they seem anxious or unsettled, offer another familiar comfort such as a lovey or small toy, along with a cuddle and quiet reassurance.
- Keep the same comfort object nearby so your baby can gradually use it as another way to settle, including when you are not immediately beside them.

Tips

- Sucking on fingers is already a familiar way for your baby to self-soothe. Stopping it all at once may make them more anxious, so begin by offering another soothing option in common situations such as bedtime or before a separation.
- Avoid comments such as "That's dirty" or "Why are your fingers in your mouth again?" Pressure can increase tension and make the habit stronger. Redirect simply: "Let your hands rest. Let's hug Teddy."

Observations

- Tries more than one way to soothe themselves
- Shifts their attention to another comforting object