

## How to get your toddler to give up a bottle and pacifier:

by  
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**se·cu·ri·ty blan·ket** *noun*  
*a familiar blanket or other piece of soft fabric held by a young child as a source of comfort.*

It's interesting that we commonly refer to things we use for our comfort as a "security blanket". But we would never call these things our "security bottle" or "security pacifier"! All toddlers need an object for comfort such as a stuffed animal or blanket, but we don't want that object to be something unhealthy for them.



Unfortunately a baby bottle can rot your child's teeth. Decay is most severe with milk bottles. *The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry* would like all toddlers to be off of all baby bottles by 12-18 months. (We will settle for 18 months, and teeth should be brushed twice daily.)

Prolonged pacifier use can cause problems with the proper growth of the mouth, alignment of the teeth, and changes in the shape of the roof of the mouth. There is also an association between pacifier use and more frequent middle ear infections.

We do encourage parents to try giving their baby a "sippy cup" as early as 6 months. (Don't force your baby if the cup is rejected.) Offer the cup more frequently after your baby is one year old. We think six months is the perfect and easiest age to stop using a pacifier. (This is when a baby's "non-hungry" sucking need begins to decrease.)

*But what if my toddler is hooked on a baby bottle or pacifier as a "security blanket"?* Maybe this trick will work for you:

Give your toddler a favorite stuffed animal to hold along with their pacifier or bottle whenever they seem to need it just for comfort. Read a book to them such as Bye-Bye Bottle (Kermit the frog does give up his bottle at the end), No More Bottles for Bunny, or The Binky Ba-ba Fairy, etc. After a week or so, try talking about a visit to a poor baby who has no bottles or pacifiers. Then plan to visit this baby and hand over all the bottles or pacifiers (find a friend with a baby who will play along). Be creative, have your toddler put all the bottles or pacifiers into a basket. Then you just don't have them! If your toddler cries for a bottle or pacifier, give them their favorite stuffed animal to hold. Parents are often surprised how quickly they switch from a security bottle or pacifier to a blanket or stuffed animal.

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