



Helping Hands

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THUMB HABIT CESSATION

Thumb sucking is a normal part of childhood. The child should not be condemned or made to feel they have done anything wrong. The child should be encouraged in a positive way to discontinue their thumb habit. By the age of 4-5 the child should be old enough to understand and desire to stop. The calendar method has been proven to be a great way to help the child remember to not suck their thumb. The child needs to be involved in every step of the program.

- ❖ Go to the store and purchase: 30 day calendar, package of special stickers, decorative band-aids, a pair of light weight tube socks.
- ❖ Place the calendar in an area that is highly visible to the child (refrigerator, their bedroom).
- ❖ Sit down with the child and formulate time appropriate incentives and write them on the calendar. (For example: 2 days—special time with mom or dad; one week—choosing a special dinner for the family; one month—special present).
- ❖ Mom or dad is the only person that is allowed to put on or take off the band-aid. The band-aid should be changed twice a day. If the band-aid is present, the parent can be assured the child has not sucked their thumb. If, on the other hand, the band-aid is off, the child has very likely slipped up.
- ❖ At bedtime, place the clean pair of tube socks over the child's hands like mittens. **LOOSELY** place a piece of masking tape on the sock, around the child's wrist so the socks may not be pulled off during sleep. The sock's purpose is twofold. First, it reminds the child that their thumb is not to be in their mouth. Secondly, if the sock is wet in the morning the child does not receive a sticker for that day.
- ❖ At the end of each successful day of wearing their band-aid and/or socks, the child may put a sticker on their calendar. As the goals are met, remember to provide the small incentives. After thirty successful days, they should receive a large incentive.
- ❖ Don't be discouraged if they slip up one day. But, be firm and don't give incentives if they haven't earned it.