



THUMBS UP!

THUMB SUCKING REMEDIATION PROGRAM

WHAT IS THUMB SUCKING?

Thumb or finger sucking is a common sight among babies and small children. Infants are born with a natural urge to suck their thumbs, which usually decreases after they reach the age of 6 months. Some children, however, continue to suck their thumbs or fingers to soothe themselves. Thumb sucking can quickly become a habit in children who do so when they feel impatient, scared, hungry, tired, or bored.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?

Although not considered a serious problem by many as far as habits are concerned, if thumb or fingers sucking persists longer than it should, some not-so-pleasant problems develop. Thumb sucking can speed up the growth of the upper jaw, slow down the growth of the lower jaw, and cause improper alignment of the teeth.

Other long-term complications may also develop. Constant pressure by the thumb or fingers can cause a high narrow palate, early loss of baby teeth, abnormal swallowing patterns, improper tongue position, and speech problems.

Children who can break the habit typically enjoy a improved appearance, an ability to speak more clearly, and better dental health.

WHEN TO BREAK THE HABIT

The best time to break the habit is before the permanent teeth grow in, at around the age of 4 to 6. Therapy performed by a qualified speech pathologist with training in orofacial myology can usually begin to reverse the negative effects of thumb or finger sucking in just a few weeks.