



مؤسسة الرعاية الصحية الأولية
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CORPORATION

ABNORMAL ORAL HABITS

Habits are routine behaviors that are repeated regularly and tends to occur unconsciously.

During normal development, children show various oral habits to convey the feelings of hunger, anger, fear and stress.

Oral habits, if persistent beyond a certain age, pose great harm to the teeth and jaws and are called Abnormal or Harmful Oral Habits.

Most common abnormal oral habits which affect the mouth are Thumb Sucking, Tongue thrusting, Mouth Breathing, Teeth Grinding and Nail Biting.

THUMB SUCKING

- Thumb sucking is a natural reflex and many babies suck their thumb in the mother's womb, even before they are born.
- While some children find the habit comforting and soothing to help them sleep, others resort to thumb sucking when they feel insecure.

When to start being concerned if the child has thumb sucking habit?

- Most children stop thumb sucking on their own by 2-4 years of age.
- It is a matter of concern if the child continues the habit beyond 4 years of age, especially at the time of eruption of permanent front teeth.



What are effects of prolonged thumb sucking?

• Depending on how long, how frequently and how strongly the child sucks the thumb, thumb sucking may cause:

1. Changes in the position of teeth:

Upper front teeth will be pushed forward. Lower front teeth will be tipped backward, and a gap will be seen between upper and lower front teeth.

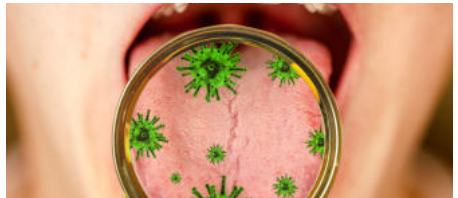
2. Growth of jaw bones will be affected

3. It will result in changes in the roof of the mouth.

4. The sucked thumb may show calluses (thickening/ hardening of the skin) or cracked skin.

5. Lipping i.e. inability to pronounce letters like S and Z.

6. Increases risk of exposure of the child to dust, bacterial and viral infections.



How to help the child give up the habit?

- Encourage the child to avoid thumb sucking habit.
- Positive reinforcement, praise and reward the child for not thumb sucking.
- Identify the triggers, distract the child from those triggers and reduce anxiety.
- Offer gentle reminder instead of scolding or ridiculing.
- If the habit is difficult to control by the above means, consult a dentist for treatment with oral appliances like cribs on palate or thumb guard.
- Other Non-nutritive oral habits like sucking fingers or objects also produce similar harmful effects on teeth and jaw bones and need to be addressed in early stages.
- Orthodontic treatment will be necessary if these habits have changed the alignment of permanent front teeth.

