

# GETTING TO “YES”

## Helping Your Child To Stop Thumbsucking

At a certain point, most parents want their children to stop thumbsucking. But some children don't want to stop. How can you help?

There are a number of ways to eliminate a thumbsucking habit, but we recommend you consider a three-step method called *GETTING TO “YES”*. This method focuses on helping the child realize “Yes - I do want to stop”. By creating the awareness of the habit and that it is undesirable, then “yes” intervention methods will work.

### Step 1: AWARENESS OF THE HABIT

This step deals with making the child aware of his/her habit and then asking if he/she wants to stop.

Jenna, remember your friend? She used to suck her thumb. But now she's a big girl like you and doesn't suck her thumb anymore.

Pretty soon you are going to be a big boy and big boys don't suck their thumbs.

Do you want to stop sucking your thumb?

Brian, you probably don't realize it, but you suck your thumb.

Billy, see that little boy over there? He sucks his thumb but he is much younger than you are.

It can also be helpful to make a chart which shows when the child sucks his/her thumb.

### Step 2: AWARENESS OF WHY IT IS UNDESIRABLE

When you suck your thumb, it pushes your teeth forward and eventually they will stay that way.

This step deals with showing the child that the thumbsucking habit is undesirable.

See, Zach, when you bite down, your teeth are supposed to be straight but yours come forward a little bit. If you keep sucking your thumb, pretty soon it will be hard to bite and chew.

### Step 3: INTERVENTIONS

Possible interventions to discuss with the pediatric dentist include:  
positive reinforcement, charts, mittens, Thumbs Away, elbow pads, & oral appliances.

**REMEMBER** You can only intervene successfully when the child says “yes” and wants to stop.

This handout is meant to encourage you to learn more about this important subject.  
We have additional information from a variety of sources - just ask. We are here to help you and your child!  
Drs. Kane, Tesini & Associates ~ Pediatric Dentistry & Orthodontics