



# Tasmanian Thumb Sucking Clinic

## Thumb and Finger Sucking

### Why does my child suck their thumb/fingers?

Thumb and finger sucking are very natural ways for infants to pacify themselves. The endorphins and dopamine that are released whilst sucking give babies comfort & pleasure.

Concerns arise if a child continues to suck their thumb or fingers, to the extent that it becomes a habit beyond infancy.

Dental professionals will observe abnormal changes in the shape of the jaw and in position of teeth from as early as 2-3 years of age, due to constant pressures from thumb or finger sucking on the developing jaw.

### Is it detrimental?

Approximately 80% of children who continue the habit beyond their early years often develop an Orofacial Myofunctional Disorder (OMD).

Shaping the jaw correctly in a "U" shape is actually the role of the tongue. However with a finger or thumb sucking habit, the tongue is forced into a low resting position in the mouth, often under the finger or thumb. In this position, it can have no influence in establishing the correct shape of the jaw.

This will in turn affect the position of the teeth within the jaw. If a narrow jaw is developing, the teeth will simply not fit, and problems with crowding and malocclusions follow.

80% of the nasal cavity is made up of the top jaw, so it also becomes mis-shapen and restricted when the top jaw is mis-shapen.

### Will they stop on their own or is intervention necessary?

It is important to discourage any thumb or finger sucking beyond the age of 2 years. This can be particularly challenging if there is a "trigger" such as a blanket or a teddy, which can be difficult to remove without a negative response.

Some children can stop on their own, however others may need professional help and guidance.

A qualified Orofacial Myologist is specifically trained to assist children in correcting their habit through a behaviour modification and positive reinforcement programme.

The programme is presented in a fun and positive way, that encourages, supports and empowers the child, using reinforcement techniques and special "reminders" to successfully stop their habit.

Contact the clinic today for a consultation.

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