

#DM2002-29

“THUMBSUCKING”

FOR MANY BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN SUCKING A THUMB OR A PACIFIER IS A NATURAL REFLEX. IT HELPS THEM FEEL SECURE AND HAPPY.

HOWEVER, WHEN PERMANENT TEETH START TO COME IN, THUMBSUCKING COULD PREVENT PROPER SPACING AND TOOTH ALIGNMENT. IN SEVERE CASES, IT CAN EVEN CHANGE THE FORMATION OF THE ROOF OF THE MOUTH.

THE INTENSITY WITH WHICH A THUMB IS SUCKED MAY BE THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE AMOUNT OF DENTAL PROBLEMS THAT MAY OCCUR AS TEETH ERUPT. YOUR DENTIST CAN HELP DETERMINE IF THIS HABIT IS LIKELY TO AFFECT YOUR CHILD'S SMILE.

TO HELP BREAK YOUR CHILD OF THUMBSUCKING, TRY ENCOURAGEMENT AND PRAISE WHEN THEY ARE NOT DOING IT. ALSO, REWARD A CHILD FOR NOT THUMBSUCKING DURING STRESSFUL TIMES - LIKE BEING SEPARATED FROM PARENTS.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S THUMBSUCKING, CONTACT YOUR DENTIST.

FOR THE ADA DENTAL MINUTE, I'M DR. MAIRA LOPEZ HOWELL.