

# Myofunctional Therapy Team

## Laura McCaslin, RDH, Myofunctional Therapist



Laura is passionate about prevention, complete care dentistry and total body health. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Augusta/Bangor with an AS in Dental Hygiene and BS in Applied Science with a minor in Biology. She completed her Orofacial Myofunctional Therapy training with the Academy of Myofunctional Therapy.

# BREAKING A HABIT IS A GOOD RULE OF THUMB

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Thumb or finger sucking is a common sight among children, however no one is really sure how it originates.

Although not considered a serious problem by many as far as habits are concerned, if thumb or finger sucking persists longer than it should, some not-so-pleasant problems develop.

The best time to break the habit is before the permanent teeth grow in, at around the age of 5 or 6. Otherwise, thumb or finger 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 problems 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.

Contrary to popular belief, breaking a chronic finger or thumbsucking habit does not cause emotional trauma.

Some methods of ending this habit are better than others.

A theory that has proven at least 90 percent effective is known as behavioral modification. Rather than using an appliance (negative reinforcement) to rid a person of the thumb or finger sucking habit, positive reinforcement establishes self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment.

In a sense, the therapy creates self-satisfaction to replace the thumb or finger sucking desire.

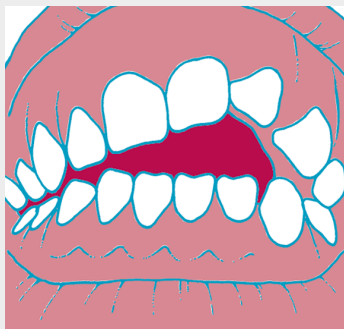
Once the habit is gone, the child gains many benefits. He or she enjoys an improved appearance, an ability to speak more clearly and better dental health. In breaking the unwanted habit, the child will also receive a boost in self-confidence.

To check into this effective habit-breaking treatment, see an orofacial myologist (myofunctional therapist). A member of the dental profession, your physician or a speech therapist can refer you to this qualified professional.

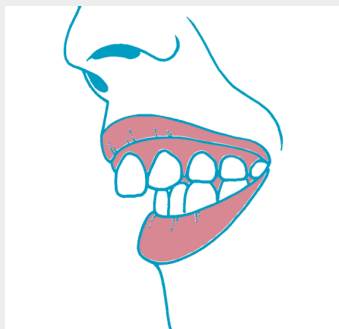
It's true: breaking a habit is a good rule of thumb.



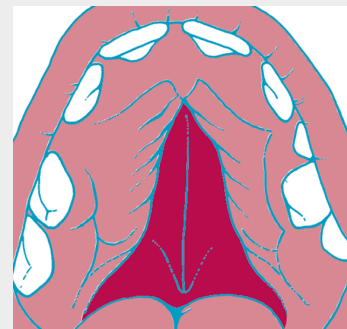
## COMMON PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THUMBSUCKING



Improper alignment of the teeth and dental arch can be a cause of thumb or finger sucking.



The position of the thumb or fingers during sucking can speed up the growth of the upper jaw and slow down the growth of the lower jaw. This can create an overjet.



Constant pressure exerted by the thumb or fingers during sucking can cause a high narrow palate.