

Thumb-sucking or mouthbreathing?

Thumb sucking is much better than breathing through the mouth in infants and small children. When the reflex in our soft palate is stimulated, it opens up the back of the upper airway encouraging mucous to drain and therefore, allowing the nose to clear. It also relaxes the diaphragm and slows the breathing down, all very necessary for an infant to feed successfully and thrive.

If babies or children tongue thrust, this is a different problem. When sucking, see if the tongue is behind the teeth. If a child is thrusting their tongue forward, this is a different problem.

Saliva kills bacteria in the mouth and throat, so thumb sucking with a closed mouth is better than mouthbreathing which dries out the saliva and makes it less functional.

Herbs that may be helpful for the infection are Echinacea, Thyme and garlic. Unprocessed seasalt gargling can be followed by a suck on a lemon. Then Manuka honey can be followed to coat the throat. Vitamin C is also very helpful. Depending on the age of the child, 250 mg up to 2000 mg is therapeutic. (The amount is determined by the child's stools. If they become loose, cut back on the dosage.)