

# A Baby's First Tooth

Babies go through many changes in their first year of life. Many of these developments, such as learning to sit up or crawl, are a joy for parents to witness. However, a baby's first tooth is an important milestone that may come with some mixed emotions from both parent and child.



Parents can use baby teeth as a way to start teaching young children about good oral care that will give them healthy smiles for a lifetime.

## Teething Can Be Unpleasant

Baby teeth, also called primary teeth, usually start to appear between the ages of six months and one year. As the new teeth erupt, babies may have sore or tender gums that can cause them to be irritable and fussy. Babies may experience other unpleasant symptoms such as loss of appetite, sleeplessness and excessive drooling. While teething, it is not normal for a baby to have diarrhea, a fever or a rash. If you notice these conditions in your teething baby, you should consult your doctor.

The side effects of teething, which can make a baby uncomfortable, can also be unpleasant for parents as some extra time and patience may be required while attempting to comfort their infant. To help soothe a baby with irritated gums, parents can try to give the child a clean teething ring to chew on. Gently rubbing your child's gums with a small, cool spoon or a wet, cool clean washcloth may also help. Parents can also rub the baby's gums gently with a clean finger or wet gauze pad. If discomfort continues or seems excessive, parents should consult their dentist or pediatrician.

## When Will the Teeth Appear?

Newborn babies typically have a partially developed set of teeth that are not yet visible. Parents will usually start to see their baby's first teeth erupt around six or seven months of age. Although, in some cases, baby teeth may already be visible when a baby is first born.

The first teeth to erupt are usually the two bottom front teeth, called the central incisors, between six and ten months of age. These are usually followed by the emergence of the four upper front teeth, the central and lateral incisors. Typically, the lower lateral incisors will appear next. After a baby's first birthday,

the first molars may begin to appear, followed by the canine (cuspid) teeth and the second molars. Although the rate and timing of tooth eruption may vary, by the time a child is three years old, all 20 of the primary teeth have usually erupted. Children typically keep all of their baby teeth until around the age of six years when they will begin to fall out and the permanent teeth will begin to replace them.

## The Importance of Baby Teeth

Although the process of teething can be a bit unpleasant, those tiny new teeth can play an important role in your baby's healthy development. Even though they eventually fall out and are replaced, baby teeth can be just as important as adult permanent teeth.

Primary (baby) teeth help children chew their food and speak properly. Healthy baby teeth also help keep a space in the jaw for the emergence of permanent adult teeth. If a baby tooth is lost too early, crowding and misalignment may occur when it is time for the adult teeth to emerge. This could result in crooked teeth and could require more complicated or expensive treatment as your child gets older.

## Keep Those New Teeth Healthy

Baby teeth are susceptible to decay as soon as they appear, so special care should be taken to keep them healthy. Tooth decay that occurs in infants is usually called baby bottle tooth decay or early childhood caries. This occurs when baby teeth are frequently exposed to liquids containing sugar. Among these liquids are milk, formula, fruit juice, sodas and other sweetened

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