

TEETHING

(Cutting Teeth; Tooth Eruption)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

The process of the appearance of baby teeth and adult teeth. New teeth erupt continually from around age 6 months to 3 years. Between ages 6 and 12, children lose baby teeth, which are replaced with adult teeth. On average, the first set of teeth is complete soon after the second birthday.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Excess saliva production, drooling, and chewing on anything the baby can hold.
- Pain. (This symptom cannot be proven, but probably does occur.)
- Gums may become red or swollen.
- Irritability.
- Fretful and clinging.
- Difficulty in sleeping.
- Crying more than usual.
- Teething should never be considered the cause of fever, vomiting, diarrhea, prolonged loss of appetite, earache, convulsions, cough, or diaper rash. These are symptoms of an illness.

CAUSES

Teething is normal. There are 20 baby (or primary) teeth and 32 permanent teeth.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Teething problems are not related to any known risk factor.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Teething problems cannot be prevented, but the symptoms can be relieved.
- The timing of teeth eruption is highly variable. However, the sequence of normal tooth eruption in children is:
 - First teeth (lower front teeth) at about 6 months, sooner in girls than boys. Teething may start as early as one month or as late as one year. Rarely, a baby is born with one or more teeth.
 - Complete set of baby teeth by about age two and a half.
 - First adult teeth at about age 6.
 - Bicuspid (side teeth) between ages 10 and 12.
 - Permanent molars at about age 12.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Teething discomfort can be partially relieved.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

None expected.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your baby's health care provider will examine the baby's mouth and gums and any new teeth at well-baby check ups. Follow any special instructions.
- Rub the child's gums with a clean finger; this is very comforting.
- Freeze a wet washcloth for the baby to chew on.
- Offer the child a safe, one-piece teething ring. It can be cooled in the refrigerator (don't freeze the ring).
- Don't put anything into the baby's mouth that might cause choking. Don't tie anything around the neck.
- Sucking a thumb, finger, or pacifier will not harm the baby's teeth. If sucking continues after age four, talk to your child's dentist to see if there are any concerns.
- Clean new teeth and gums with your finger using a soft washcloth. When the teeth are bigger, start brushing them with a baby's toothbrush.
- Begin regular dental visits at about age one.
- At age five, explain to the child that losing baby teeth is normal. This prevents the child from becoming concerned when tooth loss begins.

MEDICATIONS

- Medicine is not usually needed for teething.
- Your baby's health care provider may suggest:
 - Acetaminophen for the pain.
 - A cream or ointment rubbed on the gums to ease discomfort.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

- Don't let your baby go to bed or walk around with a bottle with milk in it. Milk that stays in contact with the teeth for a long time can cause decay.
- Start your baby or toddler off to a healthy diet that will promote healthy teeth. Avoid too many sweets, sticky foods, or constant snacks during the day.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- Your child's temperature rises above normal.
- Signs of infection such as pain, pus, a lot of swelling, or very red gums occur.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page