

# TEETHING

## What is teething?

Teething is the normal process of new teeth working their way through the gums. Your baby's first tooth may appear any time between the time he is 3 months to 1 year old. Many children have completely painless teething. Some common symptoms are increased saliva, drooling, and a desire to chew on things. Teething tends to cause mild gum pain and may interfere with sleep occasionally. The degree of discomfort varies from child to child. When the back teeth (molars) come through (age 6 to 12 years), the overlying gum may become bruised and swollen. This is harmless and temporary.

Because teeth erupt almost continuously from 6 months to 2 years of age, many unrelated illnesses are blamed on teething. Fevers are also common during this time because after the age of 6 months, infants lose the natural protection provided by their mother's antibodies. Typically fever  $>100.5$  for greater than 2 days or frequent awakenings (more than three nightly) are not attributable to teething.

## Which baby teeth come in first?

Your baby's teeth will usually erupt in the following order:

1. 2 lower incisors
2. 4 upper incisors
3. 2 lower incisors and all 4 first molars
4. 4 canines
5. 4 second molars

## How can I take care of my child?

- **Gum massage**  
Find the irritated or swollen gum. Massage it with your finger for 2 minutes. Do this as often as necessary. You may also massage the gum with a piece of ice.
- **Teething rings**  
Your baby's way of massaging his gums is to chew on a smooth, hard object. Solid teething rings and ones with liquid in the center (as long as it's purified water) are fine. Most children like them cold. A wet washcloth or banana chilled in the freezer for 10 minutes will please many infants. Avoid ice, Popsicles, or other frozen objects that could cause frostbite of the gums. Also avoid hard foods that he might choke on (like raw carrots). Teething biscuits are fine. A website where specialized teethers can be purchased is [www.rehabtoys.com](http://www.rehabtoys.com) (under oral motor then mouth toys—The Grabber, chewy tubes, etc.)
- **Diet**  
Avoid salty or acid foods. Your baby probably will enjoy sucking on a nipple, but if he complains, use a cup for fluids temporarily.
- **Medications**  
If the pain increases, give **acetaminophen (Tylenol)** or **ibuprofen (Motrin)** at an age and weight appropriate dose. Other remedies include topical soothing gels containing **benzocaine (Orajel or Orajel swabs)**. **Teething tablets** are natural and safe alternative (chamomile, fennel seed, etc.) which may be used in combination with therapies above and many parents find to be very effective.

- **Common myths about teething**

Don't tie a teething ring around your baby's neck. It could catch on something and strangle your child. Attach it to your baby's clothing with a "catch-it-clip".

**When should I call my child's health care provider?**

Call during office hours if:

- Your child develops a fever over 101°F, or 38.3°C
- Your child develops crying that doesn't have a cause
- You have other questions or concerns