



Teething



Teething can begin as early as 4 months and as late as 18 months. In all, 20 baby teeth will emerge by age 2½.

As soon as a tooth erupts, it's time to start dental care. When your baby's teething, she'll probably experience some minor discomfort. If she develops a fever, call your doctor.

- The front teeth are usually the first to erupt.
- The first tooth erupts usually between 4 and 7 months.
- It's still normal for the first tooth to appear as late as 18 months.
- The later the teeth come in, the stronger they'll be.
- The gum may be a little inflamed and there may be more drooling than usual.
- Your baby will probably chew on fingers or teething rings.
- Teething symptoms can appear weeks or even months before the tooth erupts.
- Minor changes in feeding, sleeping and bowel movements might be seen. General crankiness for a day or so before the tooth erupts is also common.
- The first and second molars, erupting between ages 1 and 3, are more likely to cause discomfort.
- In all, 20 baby teeth will emerge by age 2½.

Tips for Soothing the Discomfort

- Gently rub or massage the gums.
- Put teething rings in the refrigerator. Frozen ones can be too hard.
- Dampen a baby washcloth and then freeze it. Your baby can suck and chew on the cold cloth for relief.
- A mild pain reliever, such as acetaminophen, may help discomfort. Check with your doctor first.
- If your baby has a fever of more than 100° F, call your doctor. Teething does not cause high fever.

Tooth Care

- Use a baby toothbrush or cover your finger with a washcloth to clean baby teeth.
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle of milk or juice. It can rot baby teeth, which can affect permanent teeth.

The Fluoride Question

There's still some controversy over whether it's necessary or helpful to give babies fluoride supplements.

- Studies have shown that children given fluoride as infants have a lower risk of developing cavities.
- Some doctors recommend fluoride drops for breast-fed babies under 6 months old.
- Older babies can have fluoride supplements.
- Check with your local water agency to find out if there's fluoride in your drinking water before giving fluoride supplements to your baby.