



INFANT AND TODDLER ORAL CARE

Parents and the dentist play a big role in the healthy development of a child's teeth and overall oral health. One of the best ways to keep your child's smile healthy for life is to start good oral health habits early. Bring the child to the dentist by age 1 or within 6 months of eruption of the first tooth.

IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY TEETH

Your child's primary teeth are important. They help your child eat and learn to speak properly. The health of your child's primary teeth can affect the health of the permanent teeth. Primary teeth hold the space for permanent teeth and help guide them into the correct position. They also contribute to healthy jaw development.

A total of 20 primary teeth come in, usually by the time your child is about 2 or 3 years of age. However, each child develops at his or her own pace. If you have questions about the development of your child's teeth, speak with your dentist.

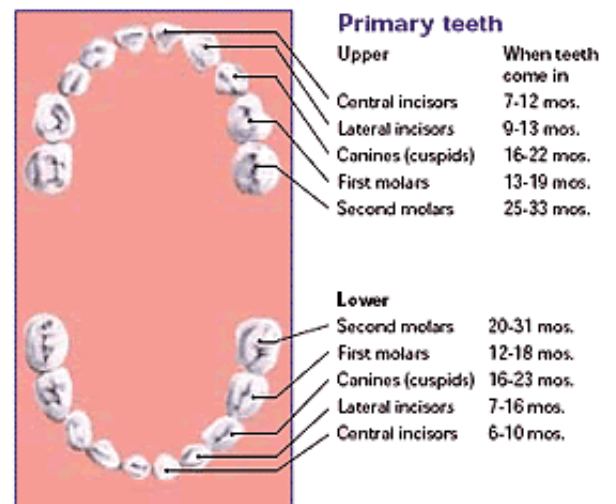
TEETHING

Your baby begins teething when the first set of teeth erupts (breaks through) from the gums. Teething usually begins around 6 months of age; however, it can start any time between 3 months and 12 months of age. Some babies drool for weeks before their first tooth comes in.

TEETHING PAIN

Some babies have no discomfort from teething. However, if your child seems to be in pain, it is likely because of the soreness, swelling and tenderness around the gums of the erupting tooth. Your child may be cranky, drool more and chew on things. These symptoms may begin about 3 to 5 days before a tooth erupts and should stop as soon as the tooth breaks the gum. To help relieve the pain:

- Gently rub the gums with a clean finger for about 2 minutes at a time;
- Gently rub the gums with a cool teething ring;
- Provide safe objects, like a clean teething ring, for your child to chew on;
- Wipe your baby's face with a clean damp cloth to remove the drool and prevent rashes.



Eruption chart of primary teeth
This chart is a guideline only.
Children grow at their own pace.

If your child is still uncomfortable, your dentist can suggest an over-the-counter medicine to ease the pain. Here's what you should not do:

- Do not use a painkiller that can be rubbed on the gums, unless you have spoken to your dentist or doctor about it. Swallowing it could harm your child.
- Do not offer your baby a teething biscuit as it can lead to tooth decay.
- Never ignore a fever. Erupting teeth do not make babies sick or give them a fever. If your child has a fever, check with your child's doctor.

CLEANING YOUR INFANT'S TEETH AND GUMS

Start cleaning your child's mouth even before the primary teeth have erupted. This will get you both into a good oral health routine and will give the teeth a clean mouth to erupt in. The goal is to wipe all parts of the gums and teeth.

Here's how to do it:

- Lay your baby in a comfortable place.
- Make sure you can see into your baby's mouth.
- Gently wipe the gums with your finger wrapped in a clean, damp cloth. If your baby has teeth, brush them with a soft-bristled, baby-sized toothbrush.
- Do not use toothpaste until your child has teeth.

SOOTHERS AND THUMB-SUCKING

Sucking is a normal, natural reflex for babies as it comforts and relaxes them. If your child needs to suck, introduce a soother (or pacifier). You can control when and how your child uses a soother. However, you can't control when your child's thumb will go into the mouth. Do not let your child use a soother all the time. Never dip a soother in sugar, honey or corn syrup, as this can cause cavities.

It is best to get your child to stop sucking before the permanent teeth come in. If your child keeps sucking a soother or his or her thumb after the permanent teeth have come in, it may cause problems with how the jaw and teeth grow. Let your child's dentist know if your child has a thumb-sucking habit.

CLEANING YOUR TODDLER'S TEETH

As your child gets older, you may find that squirming during brushing is a problem. Here's how to clean a toddler's teeth:

- Stand the child in front of you, facing the sink and mirror.
- Tip your child's head back against your stomach. This lets you control your child's movements. It also lets you see both the upper and lower teeth.
- Use a child-size toothbrush with a smear (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste.
- Brush with a gentle circular motion to clean all tooth surfaces-the cheek side, the tongue side and the chewing surface of each tooth.
- After brushing, have your child spit out the toothpaste.

TIPS TO GET YOUR TODDLER BRUSHING

It's normal for children to want to brush their own teeth. You can allow this, but check to make sure your child is doing a good job. Explain that you still want to help. A parent or adult must always carry out at least one tooth-brushing session a day. If your toddler isn't cooperating, try these tips:

- Take turns brushing each other's teeth. Let your child brush your teeth with your toothbrush and show your child how much fun it is to have someone else brush your teeth. Then you take a turn brushing your child's teeth with your child's toothbrush. Toothbrushes should not be shared.
- Set an example. Let your child see you brushing. Show off your clean teeth to your child. Your excitement will make your child excited to brush.

