



MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

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TEETHING

Definition

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 ages of 3 months to 1 year old (average age 6-7 months). Most children have completely painless teething. The only symptoms are increased saliva, drooling and a desire to chew on things. It occasionally causes some mild gum pain. The degree of discomfort varies from child to child. When the back teeth (molars) come through, the overlying gum may become bruised and swollen. This is harmless and temporary. Since teeth erupt 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 6 months infants lose the natural protection provided by their mother's antibodies and become increasingly susceptible to the common childhood viruses.

Development Of Baby Teeth

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

1. Two lower central incisors.
2. Four upper incisors
3. Two lower lateral incisors and all four first molars
4. Four canines
5. Four second molars

(The sequence may vary from one infant to another.)

Home Care

- Gum Massage. Find the irritated or swollen gum. Vigorously massage it with your finger for a minute or two. Do this as often as necessary. If you wish, you may use a piece of ice to massage the gum. Sparing use of a teething gel (Oragel, Anbusol) is acceptable, but there is a small risk of a drug reaction which may actually cause the gums to swell.
- 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 (which may be frozen) are fine. Most children like them cold. A wet washcloth placed in the freezer for 30 minutes will please many infants. They may also like some ice, a popsicle, a frozen banana, or a frozen bagel. Avoid hard foods that your baby might choke on (such as raw carrots), but teething biscuits are fine.
- Diet: Avoid salty or acid foods. Your baby probably will enjoy sucking on a nipple, but if they complain, use a cup for fluids temporarily. Some babies may need acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) for discomfort for a few days.

Common Mistakes In Treating Teething

- Teething does not cause fever, sleep problems, diarrhea, diaper rash, or lowered resistance to any infection. If your baby develops fever while teething, the fever is due to something else.
- Don't tie the teething ring around the neck. It could catch on something and strangle your child. Attach it to clothing with a "catch-it" clip.