

# Let's Talk About...

## Teething

Teething is a normal process for every child. You can help your teething baby by knowing what to expect.

### When do my baby's teeth come in?

Your baby's first tooth usually grows in the lower jaw when they're 6 to 10 months old. The teeth often follow this pattern:

- The two bottom front teeth (central incisors) come in.
- The four upper teeth (central and lateral incisors) come in 4 to 8 weeks later.
- The two lower incisors come in 1 month later.
- The first molars (in the back of the mouth) come in when your baby is about 1 year old and can cause pain.

### What can I expect when my baby starts teething?

When a tooth is about to come through the gum, you can often see a small bump underneath it. Your baby may drool a bit and chew on their hands or different objects.

Babies use their early teeth to bite, not to chew. However, babies start learning to chew as soon as they can put their toys and hands into their mouths. Once your baby has teeth:

- Give them foods to gum until their back teeth come in, including tiny pieces of peeled apple, hard crusts, or teething biscuits.
- Watch for bits of food trapped between their teeth and remove it.
- Give your child water if the doctor says it's okay, instead of juice or sweet drinks. These can cause cavities.



### How can I help my teething child?

While most children have no problem with their first teeth, some children experience mild discomfort. To help your child feel better:

- Massage swollen gums for a few minutes or rub ice on them.
- Give them a teething ring to chew on.
- Put a clean, damp washcloth in the freezer for 30 minutes and let your child suck or chew on it.
- Try giving your child tiny ice chips, frozen ice pop shavings, or frozen banana slices.

### How can I make breastfeeding more comfortable?

Your baby may bite while breastfeeding if they have sore gums. This usually lasts for 1 to 2 days. To soothe your baby's sore gums, offer a cool washcloth to chew on just before feeding. Babies cannot bite while they are actively nursing.

If your baby does bite, pull your baby firmly into your breast to unlatch the bite. After you stop the feeding, firmly say “no” and then resume breastfeeding. Don’t wince, yelp, or firmly pull your baby off your breast. This can cause pain to your nipples and also scare your baby, who may stop nursing for a short time.

If these suggestions do not work, talk to your doctor or lactation specialist about what else you can do.

## How do I care for baby teeth?

Babies can get baby-bottle tooth decay if they take a bottle of milk or juice during naps or at bedtime or use a bottle as a pacifier.

To keep your baby’s teeth from decaying:

- Brush or wipe their teeth with a washcloth after nighttime feeding.
- Gently brush your baby’s teeth with a plain toothbrush (no toothpaste) every day.
- Don’t let your breastfed baby sleep throughout the night while still attached to your breast.
- Never dip a pacifier in sugar, honey, or anything sweet or sticky.

## What if my child has a tooth injury?

A tooth or jaw injury is serious, whether it is a baby or permanent tooth. A broken or chipped tooth may injure your child’s tongue or lip during a fall.

If your child has a chipped tooth, they need to see a dentist. If your child’s tooth has been knocked out of place or out of their mouth, find the tooth and take it and your child immediately to the dentist. The dentist will decide whether to put the tooth back in or do something else to protect the remaining teeth, jaw, or both.

## When does my child need to see a dentist?

Your child should see the dentist the first time between 1 to 2 years old. After that, schedule regular check-ups every 6 months. Help your child develop good habits at an early age, including brushing their teeth twice a day and avoiding sugary drinks.

It’s important to care for your child’s teeth and schedule regular dental visits because:

- First teeth must last 6 years or more. They need to be spaced properly for later teeth and to help the jaw grow properly.
- Teeth can affect the way a child speaks. Missing teeth can make it hard for a child to speak clearly.
- Cavities can be uncomfortable and also cause severe infections.

## When should I call my child’s doctor?

Teething does not cause ear infections, appetite loss, diarrhea, fever, or cold symptoms. **If your child has any signs of illness, especially a fever, call their doctor.**



### Questions for the doctor

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