

# Baby Teeth

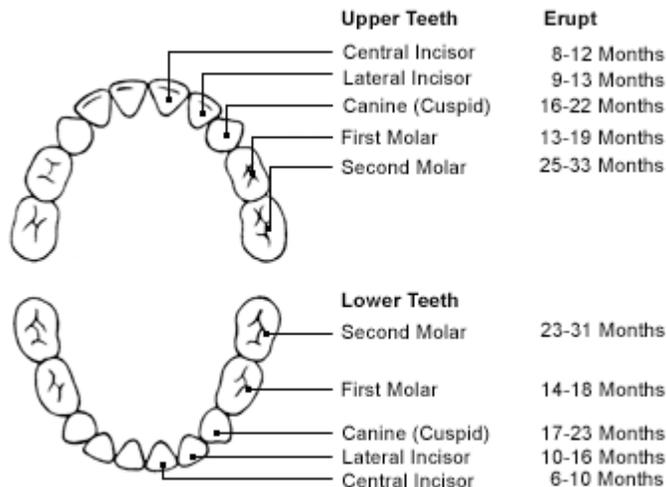
## Overview

A child's primary teeth, sometimes called "baby teeth," are as important as the permanent adult teeth. Primary teeth typically begin to appear when a baby is between age six months and one year. Primary teeth help children chew and speak. They also hold space in the jaws for permanent teeth that are growing under the gums. The ADA recommends that a dentist examine a child within six months after the first tooth comes in and no later than the first birthday. A dental visit at an early age is a "well baby checkup" for the teeth. Besides checking for tooth decay and other problems, the dentist can show you how to clean the child's teeth properly and how to evaluate any adverse habits such as thumbsucking.

## The Teething Cycle

When teeth first come in, some babies may have sore or tender gums. Gently rubbing your child's gums with a clean finger, a small, cool spoon or a wet gauze pad can be soothing. You can also give the baby a clean teething ring to chew on. If your child is still cranky and in pain, consult your dentist or physician. Most children have a full set of 20 primary teeth by the time they are three years old.

*Primary Teeth Eruption Chart*



## Keeping Your Child's Teeth Healthy

Begin cleaning the baby's mouth during the first few days after birth. After every feeding, wipe the baby's gums with a clean gauze pad. This removes plaque (a sticky film of bacteria) and residual food that can harm erupting teeth.

As soon as teeth appear in the mouth, tooth decay can occur. Therefore, when your child's teeth begin to erupt, brush them gently with a child's size toothbrush and water. Brush the teeth of children over age two with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Be sure they spit out the toothpaste and rinse with water. (Ask your child's dentist or physician if you are considering using fluoride toothpaste before age two.)

Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottle before going to bed. If you use a pacifier, use a clean one. Never dip a pacifier in sugar or honey before giving it to a baby. (Ask your child's physician or dentist to recommend a type of pacifier.)