

Teething

Overview

Although newborns usually have no visible teeth, most have at least a partially developed set of primary (baby) teeth, which begin to appear generally about six months after birth. During the first few years of life, all 20 of the primary teeth will erupt through the gums. Most children have their full set of primary teeth in place by age three.

- As their teeth erupt, some babies may become fussy, sleepless and irritable, lose their appetite or drool more than usual. Diarrhea, rashes and a fever are not normal for a teething baby. If your infant has a fever or diarrhea while teething or continues to be cranky and uncomfortable, call your physician.
- As a tooth erupts an eruption cyst may develop. The tooth will eventually rupture this watery sac as it pushes through the gums. Eruption cysts are usually harmless and should be left alone.
- Some babies may have sore or tender gums when teeth begin to erupt. Gently rubbing your child's gum with a clean finger, a small, cool spoon or a wet gauze pad can be soothing. A clean teething ring for your child to chew on may also help. Your dentist or pediatrician may recommend a pacifier, teething ring or a special "numbing" salve for the gums.
- When the teeth begin to erupt, brush them with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a little bit of water to prevent tooth decay. Toothpaste is not recommended until a child reaches age two. At that time, supervise brushing to ensure that your child does not swallow the toothpaste.
- After your child's first tooth appears, but no later than the first birthday, begin regular dental check-ups for "smile" insurance.