

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DENTAL HEALTH

Teething: The Eruption of the Baby Teeth

When do the baby teeth form?

The cells which form the hard structures of the teeth begin their work about half-way through pregnancy. The crowns of the front teeth are completed at about 2 months of age, molars at about 11 months. The roots are still forming during tooth eruption and provide the force to push the teeth through the gums.

When will my baby get teeth?

Usually at six months, but there is a wide variation. Some babies start getting teeth soon after they are born and some are toothless until they are 18 months old.

Is very early or very late tooth eruption a sign of any medical problem?

No, some rare problems include late or early tooth eruption, but the other signs are more noticeable than the tooth eruption pattern.

What is the usual sequence of eruption?

The middle front teeth erupt first and eruption alternates between upper and lower with the lower usually coming in first. The pattern usually skips over the third tooth, the cuspid. After the first molar has erupted, the cuspid then erupts.

Are babies ever born with teeth?

Occasionally: they are called *natal* teeth if they are present at birth and *neonatal* teeth if they erupt during the first month. There is a great variation in natal teeth. Some are just barely through the gums and will develop near normally. Others are hanging on a stalk of gum tissue, will never develop normally and should be

removed promptly to avoid the possibility of the tooth coming loose and being breathed-in by the baby.

How can I make teething easier?

Teething rings are important to help the teeth work through the gums. As soon as the teeth penetrate the gum tissue, the discomfort begins to go away. Try cooling the teething ring in the refrigerator. If you put it in the freezer compartment, don't give it to the baby immediately when you take it out because it is possible to get a "cold burn" on the sensitive mouth tissues. Ask your pediatrician's advice about whether to give Tylenol, and how much and how often to give it. A surface anesthetic preparation like Ora-Gel for Teething may be useful at bedtime or when the baby is particularly upset, but it washes away in a short time. Be sure to use it only according to the directions. There is no perfect solution, so just give extra love and the problem will solve itself.

Is it true that babies get sick in different ways from teething?

All kinds of problems from colds to rashes to diarrhea have been blamed on teething. The safest approach is to think of these problems as coincidental to teething. If your baby has a fever or actually seems sick, check with your pediatrician.

What are "eruption cysts"?

An eruption cyst is a soft bluish dome of gum tissue over an erupting tooth caused by a small blood vessel being broken and the fluid puffing up the gum. Usually no treatment is needed. The teeth will penetrate the gums normally.