

fruit sticks, muesli bars and even sultanas. They can stick to the teeth and lead to tooth decay. If your children are eating these snacks, offer a drink of water afterwards. Alternatively, offer some pieces of cheese or fresh fruit as snacks.



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## More tips for healthy teeth

- Never be tempted to dip your baby's dummy in honey to quieten them. This develops a preference for sweets and causes damage to teeth.
- Never offer your child any bed time bottles of milk or juice as a pacifier. The drink will remain in their mouth for a long period of time and could lead to tooth decay. If your baby has formed this habit, gradually water down each bottle in strength until, eventually, you're only giving water.
- Encourage your child to use a trainer cup (from 8-9 months and onwards). This will reduce drinks from pooling in their mouth.
- Introduce a small, soft toothbrush once teeth have erupted, perhaps as a supervised bath time toy.
- Once your baby has several teeth, start cleaning them by gently rubbing over them using either your clean finger, a piece of soft gauze cloth, a silicone finger toothbrush or a soft infant's toothbrush. Young babies have a strong swallowing reflex and an under-developed spitting ability, and as toothpaste shouldn't be swallowed it isn't recommended under the age of two.

- A baby's first teeth are softer and more fragile than an adult's and have a thinner enamel coating. They don't need as much fluoride as adults. Once your baby is over two years old, choose a children's toothpaste that's free of artificial colours, flavours, saccharin and preservatives.
- To start off with, brush your child's teeth once a day. You can then progress to after meals and before bedtime.
- Toothbrushes should be changed regularly as they can lose their shape and effectiveness.
- It's recommended that parents continue to clean their child's teeth until they're around 8-10 years old. Before this, young children don't have the dexterity and fine motor co-ordination needed to clean their teeth well.
- You should also visit a dentist when your child is 2-3 years old to accustomise your child to dental check-ups. Continue with regular visits at six monthly intervals.

The importance of learning good oral hygiene from a young age is vital to the maintenance of strong healthy teeth and gums for life.

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## A note on thumb sucking

Thumb sucking is always a concern for parents. Before any teeth emerge it won't cause any harm. But long-term thumb sucking in older children, along with prolonged use of dummies, may cause orthodontic damage.

### WARNING:

This booklet is intended to provide basic information for the general public. It is not intended to, nor does it, constitute medical advice. Readers are warned against relying solely on the information contained herein, or changing medical schedules or life activities based on the information it contains without first consulting a doctor.

# TEETHING

## BABY HEALTH



# 1

Baby's first teeth begin to form in the 16th week of pregnancy and are almost completely developed in the gums at birth. The age a baby's first tooth appears can vary a lot. Some babies begin to teethe as early as 4 months, others as late as 12 months, with the average being 6-7 months. The age at which teeth erupt has no relevance on intellect or anything else for that matter. Teething isn't a developmental milestone! Early or late teething can sometimes be hereditary.

**The age at which teeth erupt has no relevance on intellect or anything else for that matter.** There are twenty primary teeth (also known as deciduous or baby teeth). The central bottom teeth usually erupt first followed by the top central incisors. These are usually followed by the remaining incisors, molars and then canines. It is not unusual for some baby's teeth to erupt out of sequence. If this occurs it is of no concern.

The primary teeth are replaced by 32 permanent teeth, including 4 wisdom teeth. The age at which teeth are shed and replaced is just as variable as the age of eruption.

## Signs of teething

Some signs of teething may include:

- Excessive dribbling
- Rosy cheeks
- Red, bruised, swollen or sore gums
- Interrupted sleep pattern
- Irritability or unsettledness
- Pulling or tugging at the ears (due to referred pain)

- Temporary loss of appetite
- Temporary loose stools (especially with eye teeth or canines)
- Some infants may experience a clear runny nose when teething

Teething shouldn't cause any serious or long term upset. If your child has a high temperature (above 38°), prolonged unsettledness, an extended loss of appetite or severe diarrhoea, see your doctor straight away.

## For pain and discomfort

Teething may cause some pain and discomfort to your baby. Here are a few things you can do to help alleviate some of the pain:

- Use teething rings. Water filled ones are ideal because they can be refrigerated, allowing the cold ring to soothe hot and inflamed gums.
- Offer cold celery sticks, carrot sticks, peeled or quartered apple wrapped in fine muslin gauze to munch on. Semi-frozen orange segments are also good. Always supervise your baby to make sure they don't bite off a large piece and choke.
- Rub cold lemon juice or melted ice on swollen gums, this will help soothe and numb the pain.
- Infant paracetamol or ibuprofen for children may be given for pain and irritability. Ibuprofen is not suitable for infants under the age of six months. Always follow the directions and dosage carefully.
- Brauer Homeopathic Teething Relief can be given as an alternative treatment to relieve the symptoms of teething. Give as directed.
- Provide extra cuddles and comfort during the 'grizzly periods'.



## Caring for your baby's teeth Before eruption

It's just as important to care for your baby's teeth before they emerge as after. A good maternal diet, high in calcium and vitamins, is essential to the development of strong healthy teeth and gums during pregnancy and breastfeeding (artificial formulas provide sufficient calcium and vitamins where breastfeeding is not possible).

Once a baby progresses to solids a diet high in calcium is vital. Foods high in calcium include dairy products, canned salmon with bones, green beans, legumes and green leafy vegetables.

## After eruption

The protective enamel that coats our teeth is formed for life during our early years, so healthy habits and a diet high in calcium and vitamins need to be established early.

A good start can be made by offering your baby a drink of cooled boiled water instead of juice. We think of juice as being healthy, but it does contain natural sugars. If your baby's diet is well balanced, they will obtain vitamin C from other sources, like fresh fruit and vegetables.

Water from most areas contains fluoride which will strengthen and toughen the teeth - another good reason to encourage your child to drink water. If your baby refuses to drink water from a bottle, try offering it in a small plastic medicine cup or eye dropper. Keep persisting, they'll eventually take it.

Try to avoid or limit sugary foods, like lollies, biscuits and cakes in your child's diet. Beware of healthy snacks such as Roll Ups,

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