

Teething

Symptoms

Teething usually starts between 4 to 7 months. The two front teeth (central incisors), either upper or lower, usually appear first, followed by the opposite front teeth. The first molars come in next, followed by the canines or eyeteeth.

There is great variability in the timing of teething. If your child doesn't show any teeth until later than this age period, don't worry. The timing may be determined by heredity, and it doesn't mean that anything is wrong.

Teething occasionally may cause mild irritability, crying, a low-grade temperature (but not over 101 degrees Fahrenheit or 38.3 degrees Celsius), excessive drooling, and a desire to chew on something hard. More often, the gums around the new teeth will swell and be tender. If your child seems particularly miserable or has a fever higher than 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 degrees Celsius), it's probably not because she's teething, and you should consult your pediatrician.

Care Advice

1. Reassurance:
 - a. Teething is a natural process.
 - b. It's harmless and it may cause a little gum pain.
 - c. It doesn't cause fever or crying. If present, look for another cause.
2. Gum Massage:
 - a. Find the irritated or swollen gum.
 - b. Massage it with your finger for 2 minutes.
 - c. Do this as often as necessary.
 - d. Putting pressure on the sore gum can reduce pain.
 - e. You may use a piece of ice wrapped in a wet cloth to massage the gum.
3. Teething Rings or Teething Biscuits:
 - a. Infants massage their own sore gums by chewing on smooth, hard objects.
 - b. Offer a teething ring, pacifier or wet washcloth that has been chilled in the refrigerator, but not frozen in the freezer. A piece of chilled banana may help.
 - c. Avoid hard foods that could cause choking (e.g., raw carrots).
 - d. Avoid ice or popsicles that could cause frostbite of the gums.
4. Cup Feeding: If your infant refuses nipple feedings, use a cup, spoon or syringe temporarily.



5. Pain Medicine: If the pain increases, give acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) orally for 1 day. Special teething gels are unnecessary and are not recommended. They can cause allergic reactions or choking.
6. How should you clean the new teeth? Simply brush them with a soft child's toothbrush when you first start seeing her teeth. To prevent cavities, never let your baby fall asleep with a bottle, either at nap time or at night. By avoiding this situation, you'll keep milk from pooling around the teeth and creating a breeding ground for decay.

Adapted from The American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) at www.healthychildren.org

