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When Do Babies Start Teething?



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As you learn your baby's teething time line, you likely have a host of questions about baby teeth and how to care for them. Here, the experts weigh in.



Cutting teeth is one of the biggest milestones of your child's development. But many parents wonder when do babies start teething and are unsure of when they should start brushing their baby's teeth, when they should schedule the first dentist appointment and what's considered normal when it comes to teeth.

Here's what you need to know:

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TEETHING



Most babies start teething around six months, though some might start as early as four. This seems to be hereditary, as many siblings get their teeth around the same time, girls being slightly earlier than boys. Teeth also tend to pop up in pairs, and most babies get their bottom front two teeth first, followed by the top two central incisors.

As for the overall teething time line, the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) notes that after the top and bottom front teeth come in, then comes the first set of molars, followed by the canine (also called the eyeteeth). The last teeth to come in are the second set of molars. However, most dentists say you shouldn't worry about what tooth comes in when. Your child may not get teeth in the same order of another child -- and that's okay.

How long before all the choppers are in? "Children are typically three years old when they have a full set of teeth," Dr. Grace Yum, a pediatric dentist at Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago, says. "The last two to come in are the molars." Again, this can vary among children.

What Are the First Signs of Teething?

When babies are ready to cut teeth, they may become fussy, cranky and may not eat or sleep well. "A few days before a tooth is about to break through the gum tissue, the gums will look reddish and swollen. You may even notice minor speckles of blood where the teeth are breaking through the skin -- this is normal," says Dr. Victoria Veytsman, owner of Cosmetic Dental Studios. She also notes that it's common for babies to have a slight fever around this time.

When Do You Start Brushing?

Breast milk and formula have sugars that can cause decay, notes Dr. Yum, so brushing should start once that first tooth arrives. If there are only a few teeth, using a wash cloth to clean your little one's teeth is fine. Once the number of teeth increase, a toothbrush is best. "Preschoolers should be brushing for at least two minutes with a children's electric toothbrush -- they are better for children who may lack manual dexterity," says Dr. Veytsman. Brush your child's teeth until you are sure she can do it properly herself.

Don't put off the dentist visit until your child has a full set of teeth. You should start taking your child to the dentist once teeth starting coming in, or by the age of 1, whichever comes first, advises Dr. Veytsman.

When Should You Be Concerned?

As you learn more about your tot's teething time line, you might wonder if his development is normal. "If a toddler does not have teeth by 18 months, I would recommend a visit to the dentist," says Dr. Yum. When she examines kids, Dr. Yum looks to see if the teeth are crooked and tight. If so, she notes, there is a 50 percent chance of overcrowded adult teeth, and braces may be in your kid's future. If teeth are black it could be due to staining, trauma or poor hygiene.

Worried that there's too much space between the teeth? It's okay. "Too much space is ideal for adult teeth to come in straight. Adult teeth are much bigger and need space," says Dr. Yum. And while there is a range of what's considered normal, if you notice darkened areas in your little one's teeth, you should get it checked out as it may be a cavity, notes Dr. Veytsman. "It's important to monitor for cavities since enamel at this stage is much thinner than in adult teeth and babies may be more susceptible to decay." Your child should have 20 primary teeth by age 3 -- if she's missing any, you should visit your dentist, who might suggest an X-ray to make sure the permanent tooth is under the gums.

Of course, like all good habits for kids, seeing Mommy and Daddy practicing what they preach is priceless. So when you brush your own teeth, have your kids watch you. You're putting them on the road to good oral health.

For more on teething, check out these [8 Teething Facts](#).

Judy Koutsky is the former Editorial Director of KIWI magazine, a green parenting publication. She was also Executive Editor of [Parenting.com](#), [AOL Parent](#) and [BabyTalk.com](#). Follow her on twitter [@JudyKoutsky](#).

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