

Teething

Teething is the process of the infant's teeth erupting through the gums. The typical time frame for this to occur is from 6-24 months. I have seen the front teeth erupt in as early as at birth and as late as 18-22 months. But both of these cases are rare but these conditions should be brought to the attention of your dentist.

Signs of teething include bulging gums, drooling, fusing, night waking, chewing and biting fingers and other objects. Also low-grade fever and diarrhea have been attributed to teething.

The bulging, of course, is caused by the tooth pushing through the gums. The gums sometime become red and sore and occasionally, usually in the area of the large molars a dark bruise will occur in the gum above the erupting tooth. This is called an eruption hematoma and usually needs no treatment; but this also should be brought to the attention of your dentist.

Drooling sometimes can cause a rash about the lips and face; this is due to the saliva staying on the skin for long periods of time. The best treatment for this is to wash the affected area with baby soap, then rinse to be sure all the soap is removed, dry and then rub a waterproof ointment like Desitin into the skin to provide protection from the drooling. In other words, treat it like a diaper rash.

The fussing, night waking, biting and chewing, can usually be reduced by treating the discomfort caused by teething. Some remedies include massaging the bulging area of the gums with a cold clean washcloth or even mom's fingers can provide comfort. Frozen teething rings or washcloths have been shown to be effective for infants. For toddlers a frozen banana or popsicle (low or no sugar is best) will also

work. Teething gels provide only temporary relief if applied appropriately. I recommend these for severe cases to help reduce a fussing episode or to help a baby go back to sleep. Ideally you should attempt to dry the gums, and then apply the gel to the gum. To say the least this is not easy to accomplish in a baby's mouth but it increases the effectiveness if you can do it. If not, do the best you can and hope for the best.

Also, for those really fussy episodes or those late night wake ups, appropriate doses of Acetaphetamen or Ibuprofen can sometimes save the day and help reduces the fussing or get the baby back to sleep. Remember to give this remedy at least 15 to 20 minutes to take effect.

Mild fevers and diarrhea have not been scientifically proven to be associated with teething. The reason for this is the baby is coming into contact with new bugs every day and it is thought that even if teething weren't occurring the baby would be experiencing these mild bouts of fever or diarrhea. However, you should contact your physician if the fever goes above 101 rectally or 100 under the arm. And if the diarrhea is more than mild and or if it persists for several days and if any other symptoms like coughing or vomiting occur.

Remember when these beautiful pearly whites finally do erupt you should begin the proper care for them and the best way to learn this is to see your pediatric dentist within a month after they erupt.

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