

Healthy facts

ABOUT HEALTHY BABY TEETH



Baby teeth may be small, but they play a big role in your child's health. Baby, or "primary" teeth, help set up proper spacing and placement for adult, or "permanent" teeth. They also help your child learn to speak correctly, give his or her face a normal appearance and help him or her chew food comfortably.

Caring for baby teeth during pregnancy

At only six weeks, a fetus begins to form the basic substance of teeth under the gums. By the third or fourth month in the womb, hard tissue has formed. Give your child's teeth a healthy start during pregnancy with a nutritious diet and good prenatal care.

Teething can be a real pain

Most kids begin teething between two and four months of age. However, some babies are born with a tooth already showing and others may not begin teething until their first birthday. Children typically have all 20 baby teeth by age three.

What are the signs your baby is teething? Crankiness, lack of appetite, excessive drooling, fever, restless behavior, pink or red cheeks, coughing, upset stomach and chewing or sucking their fingers or toys.¹

1. Academy of General Dentistry. (2007, February). *How do I care for my child's baby teeth?* Retrieved from <http://www.knowyourteeth.com/infobites/abc/article/?abc=h&iid=296&aid=1173>

When a tooth is about to break through the gums, it may cause swelling or general discomfort. You can try to soothe the pain by giving your baby a teething ring, pacifier or cold, wet wash cloth to suck on. While thumb-sucking can bring relief, it should end by age three to prevent problems with oral development.

A visit from the tooth fairy

Get ready for the tooth fairy. By age five or six, baby teeth begin to fall out as they're pushed out by permanent teeth. By age 14, children have 28 teeth. And most will get four wisdom teeth during late adolescence, for a total of 32 teeth.

Get to know your dentist

Tooth decay can happen even with that very first baby tooth. Take your child to the dentist by his or her first birthday to catch any problems at the earliest stages. The dentist can also show you the best way to clean your child's teeth and spot any special dental needs. Going to the dentist at an early age also helps your child get used to the dentist so it's less likely to be a stressful experience.

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