

## There's nothing trivial about primary teeth

# Taking good care of your child's primary teeth is critical.

*Your child's primary teeth play a vital role in the healthy development and proper placement of the permanent teeth. Primary teeth not only preserve the spacing needed for permanent teeth to break through the gums (erupt); they also help your child develop proper speech patterns, give your child's face a normal appearance, and promote healthy eating habits by enabling your child to chew food comfortably.<sup>1</sup>*



### Teeth begin forming in the womb<sup>2</sup>

The basic substance of the tooth begins forming under the gum in the fetus at around 6 weeks of age. By the third or fourth month, the hard tissue has formed. You can give your child's teeth a great start during pregnancy with a healthy diet and good prenatal care.

### Eruption of baby (primary) teeth may cause discomfort

Most children begin teething between the ages of 2 and 4 months (some children are born with a tooth already showing, while others may not begin teething until age 1). When a tooth is about to erupt (break through the gums), your child may experience swelling or general discomfort.

Crankiness, lack of appetite, excessive drooling, fever, restless behavior, pink or red cheeks, coughing, upset stomach, and chewing or sucking of fingers or toys may be signs that your child is teething.<sup>3</sup> A one-piece teething ring/pacifier or a cold, wet cloth can ease your child's discomfort.

While thumb sucking can bring relief, it should end by age 3 so it does not interfere with your child's oral development.<sup>3</sup>

### Permanent teeth replace primary teeth

Children typically have all 20 primary teeth by age 3. By age 5 or 6, the primary teeth begin to fall out ("shedding") as they are pushed out by the permanent teeth. By age 14, children have 28 permanent teeth. With the four wisdom teeth that typically appear in late adolescence, this totals 32 adult teeth.

### Help your child build good oral health habits from the start

Decay can occur with the first tooth.<sup>3</sup> Taking your child to the dentist by his or her first birthday is the best way to catch any problems at the earliest stages. The dentist can also teach you how to clean your child's teeth properly, and identify any special dental needs (such as fluoride treatments or sealants) your child may have. In addition, your child becomes familiar with the dental chair at an early age. By building a pattern of positive dental experiences from the beginning, you can reduce anxiety or fear, and enjoy many stress-free visits in the future.

Begin caring for your' child's teeth and gums with the first tooth.

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