

Tiny Teeth, Big Changes: Understanding the Early Phase of Teething in Infants

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DESCRIPTION

Teething is a natural stage in early childhood that marks the emergence of the first set of teeth through the gums. This process usually begins around six months of age, although the timing can vary from one child to another. Some infants may show signs earlier, while others may begin later without any cause for concern. The appearance of these first teeth is an important step in growth, as it prepares the child for new feeding patterns and supports speech development over time. The process occurs as primary teeth move upward from within the jawbone and push through the gum tissue. This movement can create pressure and discomfort, which explains why many infants become irritable during this phase. Parents often notice changes in behavior such as increased fussiness, disturbed sleep or a stronger desire to chew on objects. These responses are common and are part of how infants cope with the sensation of teeth emerging.

One of the earliest signs of teething is increased drooling. Saliva production tends to rise during this period, which can sometimes lead to mild skin irritation around the mouth, chin or neck. Gentle cleaning of the area and keeping the skin dry can help reduce this effect. Along with drooling, infants may frequently place their fingers or other objects into their mouths in an attempt to relieve the pressure they feel in their gums. Another common observation is a slight swelling or redness of the gums where a tooth is about to appear. Parents might also feel a firm area beneath the gum surface when gently touching it. While this can seem concerning, it is a normal part of the process. Offering a clean, cool teething ring can provide comfort, as the pressure from biting helps ease the sensation. Chilled items are often more soothing than those at room temperature, but extremely cold objects should be avoided to prevent discomfort.

Feeding patterns may change during teething. Some infants may refuse food due to gum sensitivity, while others may want to feed more frequently for comfort. Maintaining patience during this period is important, as appetite usually returns to normal once the tooth has emerged. Breastfeeding or bottle feeding can

continue as usual and soft foods can be introduced gradually when appropriate for the child's age. Sleep disturbances are another aspect that caregivers often report. Discomfort in the gums can make it harder for infants to settle, leading to more frequent waking during the night. Establishing a calm bedtime routine may help reduce restlessness. Gentle rocking, soothing sounds or maintaining a consistent sleep schedule can provide reassurance and support better rest.

There has been long-standing debate about whether teething causes fever or illness. Mild temperature elevation may occur, but high fever, diarrhea or severe symptoms are generally not directly linked to teething. If an infant shows signs of significant illness, it is advisable to seek medical advice rather than attributing all symptoms to the teething process. This ensures that any unrelated condition is identified and managed appropriately. Pain relief methods should always be safe and appropriate for infants. Massaging the gums with a clean finger can provide comfort. In some cases, healthcare providers may recommend medications designed for infants, but these should only be used under professional guidance. Certain topical gels available in the market may not be suitable for young children, so careful selection is necessary. Oral care should begin even before the first tooth appears. Cleaning the gums with a soft, damp cloth helps maintain hygiene and prepares the child for future brushing habits. Once the first tooth erupts, a small, soft-bristled toothbrush can be introduced. Using a minimal amount of toothpaste suitable for infants ensures that cleaning is effective without causing harm. Establishing these habits early can contribute to better oral health as the child grows.

The sequence in which teeth appear typically follows a pattern, starting with the lower front teeth, followed by the upper front teeth and gradually moving toward the back of the mouth. By the age of three, most children have a complete set of primary teeth. Each stage may bring its own challenges, but the overall process is temporary and leads to an important developmental milestone. Parents and caregivers play a vital role in supporting infants during this time. Providing comfort, maintaining hygiene and observing any unusual symptoms are key aspects of care. Emotional reassurance is just as important as physical comfort,

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as infants rely on their caregivers for a sense of security during periods of discomfort. Cultural practices and traditional remedies for teething vary widely across different regions. While some methods may offer comfort, it is important to ensure that they are safe and do not pose any risk to the child. Consulting healthcare professionals when in doubt helps in making informed decisions and avoiding harmful practices.

Teething, though sometimes challenging, is a short-lived phase that leads to lasting benefits. The emergence of teeth supports chewing, speech formation and facial structure development. Understanding this process helps caregivers respond with patience and confidence, ensuring that infants receive the support they need during this stage of growth.