

## Understanding Tooth Eruption in Babies

Did you know that when your baby is born, they already have 20 primary teeth? The teeth are actually in your baby's jaw – they just haven't erupted yet!

On average, baby teeth will begin erupting between 6 months to one year of age, though can come in as early as 3 months. By 3 years of age, toddlers will have all of their baby teeth. While it's uncommon to have teeth at birth, these rare occurrences, referred to as natal or neonatal teeth, result in poorly formed and loose teeth and are sometimes removed to avoid problems.

The first teeth to come in, the central incisors which are in the lower middle jaw, are followed by the central incisors in the upper middle. The lateral incisors, on each side of the central incisors, come in next, with the top appearing first. Once the front teeth have erupted, they are followed by the molars, then canines, and finally, the second molars in the rear of the jaw. As the teeth come in, it's normal for your baby can feel some discomfort, and molars can be especially troublesome.

While teeth can cause your baby discomfort, it can also be an especially stressful time for parents. Babies may lose their appetite, sleep poorly or be extremely cranky. It's not uncommon to mistake effects of teething with sickness, as your baby can experience congestion, runny nose, and flushed cheeks with a low-grade fever. A cold compress or sucking on a cold rubber ring or spoon may relieve the pain. For fever or pain, your dentist or pediatrician might recommend acetaminophen or baby Tylenol.

Understanding what is happening as your baby's teeth come in can go a long way in relieving your anxiety and knowing when and how to treat your baby. Once all the baby teeth have erupted, practice good oral hygiene, beginning with wiping your baby's gums with a wet washcloth, then using a small, soft bristled brush twice a day on new teeth. Visit your dentist in the first year to share any concerns and get your baby used to the dentist office. You'll be glad you did.