

Teething

Teething, the emergence of the first teeth through a baby's gums, can be a frustrating time for little ones and their parents. But knowing what to expect during teething and how to make the process a little less painful can help you manage.

While teething can begin as early as 3 months, most likely you'll see the first tooth start pushing through your baby's gum line when your little one is between 4 and 7 months old.

The first teeth to appear usually are the two bottom front teeth, also known as the central incisors. They're usually followed 4 to 8 weeks later by the four front upper teeth (central and lateral incisors). About a month later, the lower lateral incisors (the two teeth flanking the bottom front teeth) will appear.

Next to break through are the first molars (the back teeth used for grinding food), then finally the eyeteeth (the pointy teeth in the upper jaw). Most kids have all 20 of their primary teeth by their third birthday. (If your child experiences significant delay, speak to your doctor.)

As kids begin teething, they might drool more and want to chew on things. For some babies, teething is painless. Others may have brief periods of irritability, while some may seem cranky for weeks, with crying jags and disrupted sleeping and eating patterns. Teething can be uncomfortable, but if your baby seems very irritable, talk to your doctor.

*Although tender and swollen gums could cause your baby's temperature to be a little higher than normal, teething doesn't usually cause high fever or diarrhea. **If your baby does develop a fever during the teething phase, it's probably due to something else and you should contact your doctor.***

Easing Teething

Here are some tips to keep in mind when your baby is teething:

Wipe your baby's face often with a cloth to remove the drool and prevent rashes from developing.

Give your baby something to chew on. Make sure it's big enough so that it can't be swallowed and that it can't break into small pieces. A wet washcloth placed in the freezer for 30 minutes makes a handy teething aid — just be sure to wash it after each use.

Rubber teething rings are also good, but avoid ones with liquid inside because they may break or leak. If you use a teething ring, be sure to take it out of the freezer before it becomes rock hard — you don't want to bruise those already swollen gums!

Rub your baby's gums with a clean finger.

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Never tie a teething ring around a baby's neck — it could get caught on something and strangle the baby.

If your baby seems irritable, acetaminophen may help — but always consult your doctor first. Never place an aspirin against the tooth, and don't rub alcohol on your baby's gums.

A Note Regarding Oragel

FDA Drug Safety Communication: Reports of a rare, but serious and potentially fatal adverse effect with the use of over-the-counter (OTC) benzocaine gels and liquids applied to the gums or mouth. Safety Announcement. 04-07-2011

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is warning the public that the use of benzocaine, the main ingredient in over-the-counter (OTC) gels and liquids applied to the gums or mouth to reduce pain, is associated with a rare, but serious condition. This condition is called methemoglobinemia. In the most severe cases, methemoglobinemia can result in death.

Benzocaine gels and liquids are sold OTC under different brand names such as Anbesol, Hurracaine, **Orajel**, **Baby Orajel**, Orabase, and store brands. These products are used to relieve pain from a variety of conditions, such as teething, canker sores, and irritation of the mouth and gums.

Methemoglobinemia has been reported with all strengths of benzocaine gels and liquids, including concentrations as low as 7.5%. **The cases occurred mainly in children aged two years or younger who were treated with benzocaine gel for teething.** People who develop methemoglobinemia may experience pale, gray or blue colored skin, lips, and nail beds; shortness of breath; fatigue; confusion; headache; lightheadedness; and rapid heart rate. In some cases, symptoms of methemoglobinemia may not always be evident or attributed to the condition. The signs and symptoms usually appear within minutes to hours of applying benzocaine and may occur with the first application of benzocaine or after additional use. **If you or your child has any of these symptoms after taking benzocaine, seek medical attention immediately.**

Benzocaine products should not be used on children less than two years of age.

Adapted from www.kidshealth.org and www.fda.gov