



Teething

Patient and Family Education

What is teething?

Teething is the normal process of new teeth pushing through the gums. A baby's first tooth usually appears any time between 3 and 12 months of age and the process continues until about 3 years of age.

What are the possible symptoms?

Your child may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Increased saliva
- Drooling
- A desire to chew
- Mild gum pain
- A blue, swollen gum over the cutting tooth
- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns

What is the treatment?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines include:

- Allow your baby to chew on a teething ring. You may place it in the refrigerator to get it cold, but do not freeze it.
- Massage the gum with a clean finger.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or less costly store brand) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil® or less costly store brand) may be given for pain. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your doctor how much medicine to give. Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
 - Do not give acetaminophen to babies less than 3 months of age without a doctor's order.
 - Do not give ibuprofen to babies less than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.
 - Ibuprofen may give better pain relief in babies over 6 months of age because it also helps decrease inflammation.
- Distract your child from the pain with activities such as reading, singing or playing.

DO NOT:

- Give ice, Popsicles® or other objects that may cause frostbite of the gums or choke your child
- Tie a teething ring or other object around your baby's neck. It could catch on something and strangle your child.
- Teething gels are not advised and may cause an allergic reaction.

When should I call the doctor?

Many unrelated illnesses are blamed on teething. Call your child's doctor for:

- Fever over 100.3°F. See the teaching sheet on Fever for more information.
- Excessive or unexplained crying.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.