

Teething

Teething brings many woes for both parent and child. It's natural and easy to feel helpless when seeing your baby in pain and discomfort. Sleepless nights can be difficult for all. The calmer you remain, the better chance there is to ease your baby's distress and discomfort. Though there is no one elixir, there are some tools and methods that can aid in temporary relief.

When does teething usually start

The first signs of teething usually present around 4 – 7 months of age.

Common symptoms include:

- Frequent crying
- Red cheeks
- More drooling
- Problems sleeping
- General fussiness
- Refusing food
- Gnawing on anything they can get their hands on

Alleviating your babies teething woes

Oftentimes there is some trial and error before you find what works for your child. It is important to remember that distracting your child from the pain is integral and this can be achieved from an array of approaches.

- Nurturing comes first. Affection, cuddles and soothing can be an excellent distraction from pain.
- Applying a slight cold pressure can ease painful gums. A clean wet finger, cold spoon or damp washcloth can be used to achieve this. Not too hard or too cold.
- Teething rings are best chilled (do not freeze), allowing your child to gnaw away. Often teething rings can be attached to clothing. Be sure to NEVER tie anything around your baby's neck, strangulation is a risk.
- Dummies are often used to help ease a distressed teething child, though this is okay, it is important to note to never apply honey or anything sweet on the dummy. This will increase the risk of decay. Dummy reliance (dependence??) can also be a problem.
- Once your baby is eating solids, other remedies can also be applied, such as sugar-free rusks, peeled cucumbers or frozen carrots large enough that it is unable to be swallowed.



TEETHING PRACTICES TO AVOID

DO NOT: add sugar, honey or jam to the tips of a baby's bottle or dip a dummy in honey. This will not ease any pain or discomfort and will only increase the risk of tooth decay and gum disease.

DO NOT: add any medicines to your child's food or bottles.

AVOID using an Amber necklace and bracelets as these present a risk of strangulation.

Pain medication and oral numbing gels

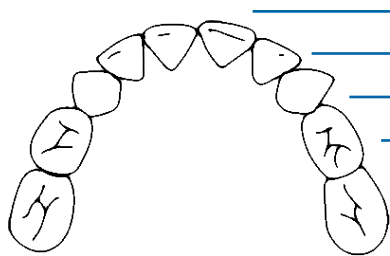
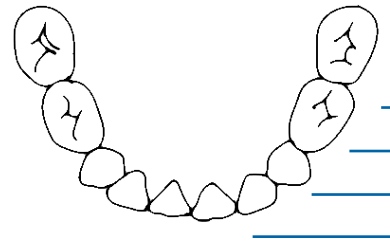
If the above methods do not provide enough relief, be sure to seek advice from your dentist or pharmacist before using any oral gels that contain numbing agents or pain medication.

***Any symptoms not outlined above, do not assume those symptoms could be related to teething, seek medical advice from a health care professional.

Baby teeth (Primary teeth)

Tooth eruption chart - Your babies first teeth

It can be equally worrying as it is exciting when your baby starts teething. Their first teeth are important signs of growth and change, as your little one learns to eat solids and communicate. Knowledge and understanding how teeth evolve are key to your baby's development. Your child's gums can be monitored for tooth eruption with the feel of a clean index finger pressing gently on the gum line. Babies should show their first signs of teeth erupting between 4 and 10 months of age, though usually by 6 months their first teeth will start to push through their gums. At the age of 3 your child should have the majority of their baby teeth and at around 6 years of age is when they start to lose their first teeth to make way for their adult teeth. If at all concerned, please see your dentist for professional advice.

		Upper Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Central incisor		8 - 12 months	6 - 7 years
	Lateral incisor		9 - 13 months	7 - 8 years
	Canine		16 - 22 months	10 - 12 years
	First molar		13 - 19 months	9 - 11 years
	Second molar		25 - 33 months	10 - 12 years
		Lower Teeth	Erupt	Shed
	Second molar		23 - 31 months	10 - 12 years
	First molar		14 - 18 months	9 - 11 years
	Canine		17 - 23 months	9 - 12 years
	Lateral incisor		10 - 16 months	7 - 8 years
	Central incisor		6 - 10 months	6 - 7 years



Healthy snacks make for a healthy child

Healthy food choices

Parents understand snacks like chocolates, lollies, fizzy drinks, and ice creams are unhealthy for their child. This is because of the high sugar content in these highly processed snack foods. These sugars cause tooth decay and gum disease, which over 50% of Australian kids suffer from. Quite often cavities and fillings are considered as inevitable outcomes, however tooth decay and gum disease are completely preventable.

The longer we expose our teeth and gums to foods, we increase the risk of tooth decay or gum disease. The more frequent we snack, the less time we give our mouths to recover between meals. This isn't just snack foods; all foods leave sugars, starches, acids and other minerals in the mouth that need to be rinsed and cleaned from the mouth cavity.

Tooth decay and gum disease begin when our mouths are not cleaned properly, bacteria (plaque) begin to grow on and between teeth and gums. Plaque feeds on sugar, so if we are not rinsing and cleaning out our mouths well enough, the plaque begins to grow. The plaque turns these sugars into acids, which then eat away at teeth.

This isn't to say that your child should never eat sugary foods and enjoy the wonders of chocolate!! It is about being mindful of how much and often your child snacks on these 'sometimes' treats. This allows you to apply the best oral hygiene routine to combat their eating habits as well as help develop healthy eating independence for their futures.

Discovering healthy snack options

It can be tough enough to find healthy snack options for your child without the added issues of fussy eaters or food intolerances. The best tool is knowledge, the more options at your disposal and the better you understand nutrition the better choices you can make around feeding your child.

Tips to remember

- Snacks are just that, small meals between meals, so be sure to keep them light and low in sugar.
- Non-processed fresh foods are always best. Packaged foods generally contain more sugars.
- Be sure to always read the label and know what you are feeding your child. If sugar is listed as a main ingredient, it is generally not a healthy option.
- Do some research and seek advice, there is plenty of information online and it can be a good way to find creative ways to feed your child fresh fruit and vegetables.



5 TIPS TO AVOID DECAY

- Avoid chewy, sticky and gummy snack foods. These are hard to clean from teeth and cannot be simply rinsed out with water.
- Avoid grazing as much as possible, dedicated mealtimes not only reduces the amount of snack foods consumed but also helps develop routine and discipline.
- Limit fruit to 2 servings per day, though fruit is good for health it is also high in natural sugars and can increase risk of tooth decay.
- Encourage your child to drink water after each meal; this will help wash away remaining food and help staying hydrated.
- Be selective with snacks, non or low processed foods are always best. Try veggies, cheese and lean meats.

Tooth decay and gum disease

Does your child have tooth decay (caries) or gum disease (periodontitis)?

Tooth decay is a disease that causes bad breath, pain, deep damage to teeth that may not be visible and even the loss of teeth. It is accompanied with a range of other oral health problems like gum disease, and it can also impact your general health. Tooth decay affects 50% of Australian children and too often it is treated as a disease that is considered inevitable, when in fact it is a disease that can be avoided completely.

- TOOTH DECAY IS PREVENTABLE
- PREVENTING DECAY IS NOT DIFFICULT
- EARLY DECAY CAN BE REVERSED
- PREVENTATIVE ORAL HYIEGINE & LIFETYLE CHOICES ARE THE BEST DEFFENCE AGAINST DECAY AND GUM DISEASE

Baby teeth are at risk of decay

Baby teeth are at risk of decay as soon as they start erupting through the gum line. Never fill their baby bottle with soft drink, juice, sports drinks, flavoured milks, or anything sweet that exposes your child to sugar for long periods of time, this is simply asking for tooth decay. The same is said for dipping dummies in honey.

Eliminating the risk of decay in toddlers

The best defence against tooth decay and gum disease is developing good oral hygiene habits with your child and educating them about oral health care from an early age. Brushing your toddlers' teeth and gums twice a day is integral to their oral health and future. This reduces the chance for bad bacteria to linger in the mouth, as well as being the first steps to developing a daily oral hygiene routine that will keep their smiles happy for life.

Making lifestyle (diet) choices is an integral part of your child's oral health. We often first think and worry about the amount of chocolates, lollies or fast food they are consuming, though these are high in sugars if consumed in moderation (special or sometimes food), tooth decay can still be prevented, if good oral hygiene routines are established and maintained from a young age. It is always best to opt for healthy snacks over sugary food and drink, however even if healthy snacking happens too frequently the risk for tooth decay

increases. Routine, moderation, and excellent oral hygiene are key.

Inspecting your child's mouth for decay

It is important to monitor your baby's teeth and gums to ensure no decay is developing. This can be achieved easily by lifting the upper lip gently and rolling the lower lip down to inspect. Early signs of tooth decay will present as white patches on the teeth that do not clean away after brushing. At this stage decay can be prevented. Improve oral hygiene routine and visit your dentist for advice. If grey, brown, or black spots are visible anywhere on the tooth, call your dentist as soon as possible to book an appointment. These are possible signs of more severe oral health concerns.

Also, a child's Behavioural changes can be an indicator that something is wrong. Waking regularly at night time, signs of discomfort or pain around the mouth and teeth and bad breath are possible signs of tooth decay or gum disease.

Parents are responsible for their childs oral health care

Children learn and develop directly from their parents; this includes copying your oral health care. Babies and toddlers cannot effectively brush their teeth. Both healthy and unhealthy routines are formed from a very young age and the longer poor habits are left unaddressed the harder they become to break and can carry over into their adult lives with potentially long-lasting oral health concerns.





Visiting the Dentist

When Should I first take my child to the Dentist?

Dentistry isn't just about teeth it also includes gums, the tongue, lips, and the entire mouth cavity. Though it can easily be considered your baby doesn't need to see a dentist until they have a full set of teeth; it is best to visit your dentist when the first teeth begin to poke through or at 12 months of age as a general rule and especially if none have started to erupt through the gums. Your dentist will perform several routine checks and can diagnose early warning signs of gum disease, tooth decay or developmental problems.

The very first visit

Like all new experiences, babies can become fussy and distressed on their first dental visit. This is normal and expected, crying, and screaming doesn't mean your baby is in pain and dental professionals are trained to handle such situations to ensure your baby is comfortable throughout the examination. They will work closely with you to aid in the baby's comfort, hopefully making the dental visit a positive experience.

Like all firsts, it is also a moment to cherish and remember like their first haircut. Ask your dentist if it will be okay for photos to be taken? and assist to make the visit enjoyable. The first dental visit can be thorough, a big part of the visit is ensuring the parents are well informed about oral health care especially if it's the first child. Your Dentist will ask about their full medical history to better understand their overall health and development.

Key factors your dentist will discuss with you

- Teething
- Brushing techniques
- Oral hygiene
- Bite (how your child's teeth will come together)
- Soft tissues (gums, tongue, lips, and cheeks)
- Any habits such as thumb sucking
- Diet and chewing capacity

Dental Visits - The 5 DO NOT'S

- Your child is already brave, do not tell them 'They need to be brave' for visiting the dentist.
- Do not use bribes.
- Don't tell your child it will not hurt, or it will.
- Don't use the dentist as a deterrent or punishment.
- 5. Try not to be anxious yourself.

Preparing your child for future dental visits

Parents play the most integral role when it comes to oral health care for their children, not only do they need to be responsible for actively implementing oral hygiene routines, but equally important is how the parents behave and speak about the dentist. It is important when referring to the dentist, to do so in a positive manner and in terms that they can relate too. For example, "It's time to visit the tooth fairy's best friend" or "who wants to go for a ride in the dental chair". Make it a fun experience and never show fear of the dentist even if you yourself find the experience stressful.

One of the most important things to remember is to not use the dentist as a deterrent. If your child is threatened with more dental visits if they are not brushing their teeth, it is more likely to build a fear of the dentist. Try to not talk about any negative experiences you may have had and avoid using terms like needle, drill, pulling teeth or anything that can be associated with pain.

Before your child's first dental visit, it can be helpful to 'play dentist' much like any other game they would pretend to play with. This is where you can start to educate them about the dentist and teeth and begin to build a positive association with dental visits. Try to refrain from too much detail though, your dental team are well trained to communicate on your child's level who they are, what they do.

Remember to always remain calm and positive.

Brushing teeth with babes & toddlers

Babies

Even if your baby hasn't started teething, it is still important to clean their gums. Bacteria can still grow in the mouth cavity even without teeth being present. Just like brushing teeth, clean their gums twice a day with a cool damp cloth. This will start to instil the routine of brushing teeth and oral hygiene.

As soon as their first teeth appear, it is time to start brushing with a child sized soft bristled toothbrush. No toothpaste is required until they are around 18 months of age or when directed by the dentist. Support your child's head from behind with your arm or lay them down and use your hand to gently cup their chin. This will allow you to hold their mouth open, whilst keeping them comfortable and secure. Gently brush each tooth as well as the gums in circular motions.

Flossing is equally important as brushing, it may be difficult at first to find the right technique, if at all unsure speak to your dentist about improving flossing techniques with young children



Toddlers

Toddlers can make the daily oral hygiene routine seem like an act of war. The Kicking, screaming and general tantrums twice per day can be overwhelming to the point of giving up. However, the alternatives can be painful and most definitely a more costly experience. Not having a good oral hygiene routine along with poor nutrition and not having regular dental visits, will most certainly end up in tooth decay and or gum disease. This means they will experience pain, have bad breath, have possible lifelong oral hygiene issues, and certainly require expensive dental treatments. In extreme cases some babies have had to be hospitalised to have all their baby teeth removed, a potentially life threatening operation that will also affect their whole life.

You may think that it's okay as they will lose their baby teeth and oral hygiene can be focused on when they get their adult teeth. By this stage it is already way too late.

Make Brushing Time Fun!

- Make a game out of brushing teeth, whatever game you can invent that will encourage and hold your child's attention.
- Always brush first with your child, this helps to demonstrate that everyone needs to do it and it's a part of daily life.
- Sometimes it takes some fun dental products to help make the experience more enjoyable. Let your child choose a fun toothbrush, toothpaste and brush holder that suits them, there is a range of fun products out there to choose from. Just ensure they are designed for children and the toothpaste is child friendly.
- It can be helpful to play a song while brushing. This will help with timing (remember 2 mins) as well as making it fun. There are plenty of tooth brushing songs online via; YouTube, google play or the App store.
- Brushing charts can be helpful. This not only helps with building routine but also oral hygiene independence and discipline. Create non food related rewards systems for achieving brushing goals.

Flossing

Flossing is equally important as brushing, it may be difficult at first to find the right technique, if at all unsure, speak to your dentist about improving flossing techniques with young children.

Regular dental visits

Be sure to maintain regular dental visits for you and your family. This is the best way to ensure you and the whole family are well informed and confident about their own oral hygiene.