

## GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Suburban

Pediatrics

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# When your child is teething

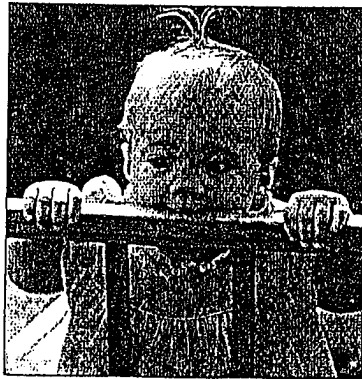
By Barton D. Schmitt, MD

Teething is the normal process of new teeth working their way through the gums. Your baby's first tooth may appear any time between 3 months and 1 year of age. Baby teeth usually, but not always, erupt in the following order during the first three years of life: two lower incisors, four upper incisors, two lower incisors and all four first molars, four canines, four second molars (behind the first molars).

For most children, teething is painless. The only symptoms are increased drooling, and a desire to chew on things. Teething occasionally causes mild gum pain, which doesn't interfere with sleep. The degree of discomfort varies from child to child, but your child won't be miserable. When the permanent molars (back teeth) come through between 6 and 12 years of age, the overlying gum may become bruised and swollen. This is harmless and temporary.

Since teeth erupt continuously from about 6 months to 2 years of age, many unrelated illnesses are blamed on teething. Fevers are also common during this time because after 6 months infants lose the protection provided by their mother's antibodies. Teething does not cause fever (except in rare cases, when temperature may rise to 101° F), sleep problems, diarrhea, diaper rash, or lowered resistance to infection. It probably doesn't even cause crying. If your baby develops a fever while teething, something else is likely to be causing it.

for two minutes. Do this as often as necessary. If you wish, you may use a piece of ice to massage the gum.



**Give your child something to chew on.** Your baby's way of massaging the gums is to chew on a smooth, hard object. Solid teething rings and ones with liquid in the center are fine. Most children like them cold. Don't tie the teething ring around your baby's neck. If it caught on something, it could cause breathing problems. Instead, attach it to the baby's clothing with a "catch-it" clip. A wet washcloth placed in the freezer for

30 minutes will please many infants. They also may like a piece of an ice pop, a frozen banana, or a frozen bagel. Teething biscuits are fine, too. Choose foods that soften with chewing. Avoid hard foods that your baby might choke on, such as raw carrots.

**Avoid irritating foods, relieve pain if necessary.** Do not give your child salty or acid foods because they can further irritate the gums. He probably will enjoy sucking on a nipple, but if he complains, use a cup for fluids temporarily. A few babies may need acetaminophen for a one or two days to relieve pain. Special teething gels are unnecessary. If you do use them, do not apply them more often than four times a day. Do not use them on babies under 4 months of age.

### HOME CARE

**Massage your baby's gums.** Find the irritated or swollen gum and massage it vigorously with your finger

### Call our office if:

- Your child develops other symptoms.
- Your child becomes more uncomfortable.