

TEETHING

Your baby's first teeth will start coming through their gums when they are between 4 and 12 months old – this process is called teething.

Usually, the bottom front teeth come through first followed by the top front teeth, then the teeth on either side of these. These early teeth are all called incisors. The back teeth (molars) and pointed canine teeth come through at 12 to 16 months, or older.

Your baby will often show signs that they are teething about 3 to 5 days before a tooth appears. These signs are usually mild and don't last long.

Teething can hurt, and you may notice that your baby isn't eating or sleeping as well as they usually do. They may have red and swollen gums and their face or cheeks may be red too. Your baby may:

- bite and chew things
- dribble
- rub their gums
- suck on things
- be irritable and wakeful.

Teething should not make your baby ill. See your doctor if your baby has a high temperature (above 38°C), or diarrhoea.

How can I help my teething baby?

- Gently rub your baby's gums, using a clean finger.
- Give your baby something **clean and cool** to chew on, for example:
 - o a teething ring that has been cooled in the fridge. Solid teething rings are better than liquid or gel ones, which could leak. Don't put the teething ring in the freezer because the cold could damage or burn your baby's gums. Also, don't tie the teething ring around your baby's neck because it might choke them.
 - o a wet flannel.
 - o chilled fruit or vegetables, such as: pieces of banana, cucumber, apple or carrot (for babies who have been weaned).
- Give your baby cool, sugar-free drinks to soothe their gums.
- Wipe your baby's face regularly with a clean, dry cloth or towel if they are dribbling a lot. This will help to stop them getting a rash on their face.
- If the suggestions above don't work, giving your baby paracetamol or ibuprofen may ease any teething pain. Don't give paracetamol or ibuprofen to babies under 3 months old.
- Don't give your baby anything to chew that might break into hard pieces because it might choke them.

- Don't use mouth gels containing salicylates in children aged under 16 years. These could cause Reye's disease, a rare illness affecting the liver and brain.
- Avoid giving your baby teething biscuits or rusks because they contain sugar and can cause decay in teeth that have already come through.
- Avoid using teething gels containing a local anaesthetic, such as lidocaine. These have caused harm when too much was used, and it's not clear that they work for very long.
- Avoid herbal teething powders and homeopathic remedies because it's not clear whether these work.

What else can help?

See the NHS Choices film: 'How do I soothe my teething baby?' by typing 'teething' in to the search box on the NHS Choices website (www.nhs.uk) or view the video [here](#).

The Cry-sis charity supports families with crying and sleepless babies. Their website (<https://www.cry-sis.org.uk/>) has lots of useful information, and their helpline is available every day 9am to 10pm: 08451 228 669.

Do I need to see my doctor?

See your doctor if your child:

- has a high temperature (above 38°C)
- has diarrhoea
- seems to be unwell or in distress.

How do I look after my baby's teeth once they have come through?

See NHS Choices information:

- 'How do I brush my child's teeth (6 mths to 7 years)' ([video](#))
- Looking after your baby's teeth: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/looking-after-your-infants-teeth.aspx

Register your baby with a dentist when their teeth first start to come through, or no later than 1 year of age. Get your child used to going to the dentist by taking them with you when you go.

Where can I find further information?

A list of dentists accepting NHS patients can be accessed via NHS 111 or NHS Direct Wales.

NHS Direct Wales: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales Tel: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute, in addition to telephone providers access charge.