Teething

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Teething can be hard for babies. It usually begins between 4 and 7 months and lasts well into toddlerhood when molars come in. You may also see gums swelling before teeth show through. Here is some information about teething, baby's first teeth, and how to care for them.

WATCH FOR CLASSIC TEETHING SIGNS.

You can't tell for sure that a baby is teething until you start to see the tooth. However, some signs of teething may be your baby gnawing or chewing on things. They may also rub their ears, drool more, have a flushed, red, face, and/or be more fussy than usual.

OFFER SOME RELIEF FOR TEETHING PAIN.

Offer a cool clean washcloth or teether (silicone or latex) that has been chilled in the refrigerator. Massage baby's gums with clean hands or let them mouth and "chew" your knuckle to soothe swollen gums.

WHAT ABOUT BITING IF YOU ARE BREASTFEEDING OR CHESTFEEDING?

Try to express some milk before latching. This may help your baby settle into the feeding more quickly. After that, aim to catch your baby before they clamp down to bite. Watch for their jaw to tighten or tongue to shift. If it seems like they may bite, remove them quickly and offer a cold washcloth.

AVOID TEETHING NECKLACES AND BEADS.

The FDA has not approved teething necklaces or bracelets or found them to be effective. They can also accidentally strangle your child, and if they break, they can be choking hazards.

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DO NOT USE BELLADONNA OR BENZOCAINE.

While these are said to help with teething pain, the FDA has issued warnings against both of them. Don't give them to your baby. Ask your child's primary care provider about using acetaminophen (Tylenol) instead.

LOW-GRADE FEVERS UNDER 100.5 COULD BE FROM TEETHING.

Your child's primary care provider can recommend whether to give your baby medication. Fever above 100.5 are likely due to illness, so call your provider.

TAKE CARE OF BABY'S GUMS AND BRUSH NEW TEETH RIGHT AWAY.

Start an oral care routine early. Wipe baby's gums with a clean, damp washcloth or gauze pad after each feeding. Once teeth come through, use a baby (rounded end) or silicone toothbrush and a small smear (about the size of a grain of rice) of fluoride toothpaste to brush new teeth well, twice a day.

FIRST TOOTH MEANS FIRST DENTIST APPOINTMENT.

Once your baby has their first tooth you can take them to the dentist. Ask about fluoride varnish. Find out if your home's tap water has fluoride (bottled water does not). If not, ask about fluoride drops.

Adapted from resources from the American Academy of Pediatrics: Teething Necklaces and Beads: A Caution for Parents Baby Teething Pain, Why It's Important to Take Care of Baby Teeth, and Baby's First Tooth: 7 Facts Parents Should Know

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

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