

## *Teething*

Babies spend a considerable portion of their first year getting new teeth. The first teeth to erupt are usually the two lower central incisors, followed weeks later by the two upper central incisors and the two upper lateral incisors. Babies may chew on their hands or on teething toys and seem a bit irritable for weeks before a tooth actually erupts. Some babies have a little nasal congestion during this process.

A baby may have ten or twelve separate illnesses in the first year. Illnesses and periods of teething may overlap. Many parents and grandparents believe that the teething process somehow causes illnesses or fever. This theory has been studied, and has never been proven. The reality is that teething and illnesses with fever are independent processes which frequently occur simultaneously. You should not automatically attribute the fever to teething. This is particularly important when a baby younger than three months of age has fever. Call us immediately if this happens.

Teething may be painless or your child may experience some discomfort. Teething does not cause fever, diarrhea or diaper rash. If these symptoms occur, they must be considered and treated separately from teething.

If your young child is drooling excessively and chewing on everything in sight, chances are a new tooth is on the horizon and is beginning to break through the gums. An infant's first teeth may appear at 6 - 10 months of age, but each child has an individual time table. Earlier or later teeth are usually within the realm of normal. The two lower front teeth are generally the first to make an exciting appearance.

You can bring some comfort to your teething child by massaging his gums with your finger. Chewing on smooth hard objects or a wet washcloth or teething ring may feel good on inflamed gums. But avoid small, hard or round foods a child might choke on and don't tie teething rings around your child's neck, as this could cause strangulation. It is also recommended that you avoid ice or frozen teething rings or washcloths, as these can be too cold for a baby's gums, and even result in frostbite! Teething gels that numb the tooth area are unnecessary and many of them contain benzocaine, which may numb your child's throat and tongue and cause him/her to choke.

If your child is teething and has a fever or is extremely uncomfortable, call us for advice. Sometimes nursing babies will bite your nipple while at the breast as they cut those first teeth. Gently pull the baby off your breast and kindly but firmly tell him "no biting!" - then return to the nurturing task at hand.