

View this article online at: patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-look-after-your-babys-first-teeth

How to look after your baby's first teeth

The dreaded teething period is difficult for many parents. When your baby's first teeth start coming through, it's painful and uncomfortable for them - and can make them grumpy and disrupt their sleep. Unfortunately, though, it's a necessary part of their development. And as soon as that first tooth appears, it's time to start looking after their oral health.

February is Children's Dental Health Month. In 2023, an annual NHS report¹ in England showed that:

- 56% of children were seen by an NHS dentist in the past 12 months.
- This is below the pre-pandemic levels of 59%.
- Children aged 0-4 years were seen the least - just 31%.

Caring for your baby's first teeth

Karen Coates, a registered dental nurse and content specialist for the [Oral Health Foundation](#), says: "Babies' teeth begin to erupt at around six months old and go on until they are around two and a half years old.

"As soon as [your child's first tooth comes through](#), you should start planning their first trip to the dentist. If it is started early enough it will feel more like a routine rather than something big and scary."

In the UK, you can sign your child up at your own NHS dentist, or search for one nearby. However, many dental clinics have long waiting lists. You can visit a private dentist, but you will have to pay for these check-ups.

People often think that baby teeth are not as important as adult teeth, but this isn't true. Baby teeth - also known as milk teeth - are essential for learning to speak and eat. They are important for the alignment and spacing of your baby's permanent adult teeth.

"There can be repercussions if they are not taken care of," says Coates. "This can be anything from pain for your child or impacting the adult teeth coming through properly, leading to misaligned teeth."

When to start brushing your baby's teeth

You don't need to wait for your baby to have all their teeth before you start brushing them. As soon as they have one - which usually happens when they're around 6 months old - you can start making brushing a part of their routine. Use a toothbrush with a small head and soft bristles, or you could also try a finger toothbrush, which are normally made from silicone and sit on top of your finger.

For babies, it can help to sit them on your knee and support their head against your chest while you brush their teeth. The toothpaste should contain at least 1,000ppm of fluoride as this helps prevent and control decay.

Brush the teeth in small circles with a small smear of toothpaste and gradually build up how thoroughly you do it as they get used to the brush. You should brush their teeth twice a day - once before bed and any other time.

What to do if your baby hates having their teeth brushed

If your baby hates having their teeth brushed and cries, here are some helpful tips to encourage them to tolerate it:

Don't panic - it's normal if they cry, so don't worry. Just stick with it and gradually work it into their routine.

Brush your teeth at the same time - seeing you do it may encourage them to copy you.

Let them hold the toothbrush - they might enjoy it more if they are in control. However, keep a close eye on them to avoid accidents. It's easy for a baby to push the toothbrush too far into their mouth, or to poke themselves in the eye.

Further reading

1. [NHS: Dental statistics for England, 2022-23, annual report.](#)

Disclaimer: This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Authored by: Lydia Smith	Peer Reviewed by: Dr Krishna Vakharia, MRCGP	
Originally Published: 24/02/2024	Next review date: 05/02/2024	Document ID: doc_32469

View this article online at: patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-look-after-your-babys-first-teeth

Discuss How to look after your baby's first teeth and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).



To find out more visit www.patientaccess.com
or download the app



Follow us

