

The Pediatric Chairside Instructor



A Visual Guide to Children's Oral Health



Tooth Development: Primary Teeth



Baby teeth, also called **primary** or **deciduous (de-SID-joo-us)** teeth, help children chew and speak normally. They hold space in the jaws for the **adult (permanent)** teeth that come in later.

The chart to the left shows when each tooth usually comes in (**erupts**) and is lost (**sheds**). Not all children get the same teeth at the same time. Teeth may come in earlier or later than shown here. Most children have a full set of 20 baby teeth by the time they are 3 years old.

Baby (Primary) Teeth

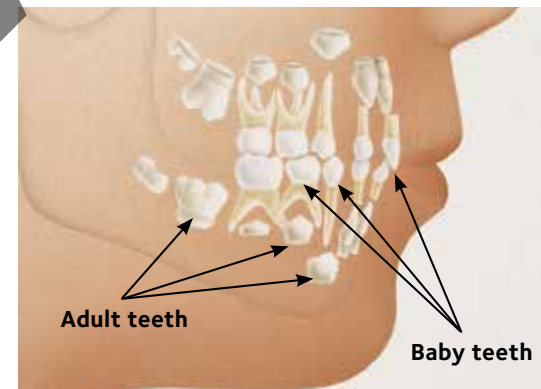
Order of Eruption*	Upper Teeth	Erupt	Shed
1	1 Central incisor	6-10 mos.	7-8 yrs.
2	2 Lateral incisor	8-12 mos.	8-9 yrs.
3	3 Canine (cuspid)	16-20 mos.	11-12 yrs.
4	4 First molar	11-18 mos.	9-11 yrs.
5	5 Second molar	20-30 mos.	9-12 yrs.

	Lower Teeth	Erupt	Shed
5	5 Second molar	20-30 mos.	11-13 yrs.
4	4 First molar	11-18 mos.	10-12 yrs.
3	3 Canine (cuspid)	16-20 mos.	9-11 yrs.
2	2 Lateral incisor	7-10 mos.	7-8 yrs.
1	1 Central incisor	5-8 mos.	6-7 yrs.

* The age at eruption/shedding varies and is less important than the order in which the teeth come in or fall out.

Baby teeth are important. They hold space for the adult, permanent teeth, and they help with chewing. Baby teeth also help when learning to talk. The front teeth especially are important in helping your child make certain sounds, like "s," "f," and "th." If baby teeth are lost too early, it may be difficult for your child learn to speak clearly.

Early Childhood



Adult teeth start to form under the baby teeth.

Bite Check



By the time a child is 6 years old, a dentist can check how well their teeth meet, known as their “bite.” A bad bite is when the teeth are crowded, crooked, or out of line, or the jaws don’t meet properly. A bad bite may be noticed as early as age 2, but it is usually seen between the ages of 6 and 12, when the adult teeth are starting to come in.

Possible Problems from a Bad Bite

- Crooked, crowded teeth may keep the jaws from developing evenly and properly
- Some severe bad bites may cause trouble with eating and speaking
- Crooked teeth can make it more difficult to keep teeth and gums clean, which can lead to tooth decay and gum disease
- Teeth that are out of line can be worn down faster
- A bad bite or crooked teeth may make children feel less confident about their looks

Early treatment may help prevent a bad bite or make it less severe. The dentist checks your child’s bite at every visit, which is another reason why regular dental appointments for children are important. If treatment to correct a child’s bite is needed, the dentist may refer your child to an orthodontist. Treatment to correct a bite usually begins when children are between 8 and 14 years old.



This child has jaws that don’t properly meet. If not treated, it can lead to problems with facial development.

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This is an example of a severe underbite, where the lower front teeth are improperly positioned in front of the upper front teeth

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How to Brush Your Child's Teeth



When Your Child Can Brush on Their Own

- Make brushing a twice-a-day routine. You may be tempted to skip brushing after a long day or when your normal schedule is off. But, you can make brushing second nature for your child by doing it twice every day for two minutes.
- Reward good brushing behavior. You can encourage your child with rewards that motivate them—whether it's letting them earn stickers for a reward chart or giving them a big high five.
- Let your child pick their toothbrush. Take them shopping and let them choose a toothbrush with their favorite character and toothpaste with the ADA Seal of Acceptance in a flavor that they like.



By around age 10 or 11, most children should be able to brush their teeth without supervision. When your child brushes their own teeth, be sure they use short, gentle strokes to move the brush back and forth while cleaning all areas of the teeth: the outer surfaces, inner surfaces, and chewing surfaces.



Look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance.

Choose oral health products that display the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance. This means they are both safe and effective in keeping your child's mouth healthy.

Treating Cavities in Baby Teeth



General Steps of a Filling

1. First, your child's mouth may be numbed with local anesthesia and the tooth is prepared for the filling.
2. Next, the dentist removes all of the decayed area from the tooth.
3. The tooth is then rinsed and dried to get it ready for the filling material.
4. The filling material is placed and shaped. Once the new filling is in place, your child's dentist will shape to restore the form of their tooth. Your child's bite is also checked to make sure it feels natural.

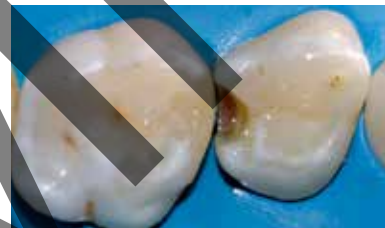
If the cavity is severe, a dental crown may be the best treatment option. A crown is a "cap" your child's dentist can put over a tooth. It restores a damaged tooth to its normal shape, size, and function and can protect the tooth from further decay. Crowns can be made from several types of materials. Metal alloys, ceramics, porcelain, porcelain fused to metal, or composite resin may be used.



First, the tooth is prepared for the filling.



Next, the decayed area is removed from the tooth.



The filling material is placed and shaped.

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When the filling is in place, your child's dentist will check their bite.



Stainless steel crown

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Ceramic crown

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Silver Diamine Fluoride



Silver diamine fluoride (SDF) is another treatment for tooth decay. It is a liquid that can be easily applied in the dental office. Your child's dental care provider can brush SDF right over tooth decay without using a dental drill or local anesthesia. The silver in SDF kills the germs that cause tooth decay. SDF also has fluoride in it that helps prevent, slow down, or stop decay.

SDF can also be used to help relieve tooth sensitivity and treat tooth decay on roots that may become exposed in adults.

Many people can benefit from SDF, but it is especially helpful for those who have trouble sitting for long periods of time to allow the dentist to place a traditional filling.

SDF does, however, have some drawbacks—the main one being a black staining of the treated decay. Despite the staining, **it is safe to use** and does not stain the untreated, healthy surfaces of the tooth, surrounding teeth, or permanent teeth that have not yet come in. This staining of the treated decay does not fade over time. However, the treated decay can always be treated with a cosmetic filling later if desired. The gums next to the decay may also develop a temporary stain or irritation, but this is rare. Some people also may experience a temporary metallic taste during treatment. SDF will also need to be reapplied about every six months for continued benefit in stopping decay.



Decay on baby teeth before SDF is applied



Decay after SDF is applied. SDF can create black staining on teeth.

*Despite the staining, **SDF is safe to use** and does not stain the untreated, healthy surfaces of the tooth, surrounding teeth or permanent teeth that have not yet come in.*

Vaping



Oral Health

Vaping Is Not Harmless

Many people take up vaping, thinking it's safer than smoking cigarettes, cigars, or pipes, or using smokeless tobacco, but vaping comes with health risks, too.

Children and Teens Vaping Is a Public Health Threat

Vaping is especially common among children from middle school to high school. In a 2023 study, about 1 out of every 22 middle school students (4.6%) said that they had used e-cigarettes in the 30 days before completing the study questionnaire. In that same study, 1 of every 10 high school students (10%) reported having used an e-cigarette in the previous 30 days.

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