

Teething

My little brother had an outfit when he was a toddler, it said, “Teething is the Pits,” that about sums it all up. Teething generally begins around six months old, but can begin as early as two to three months or as late as fourteen months and in very rare instances (1 in 2,000-3,000) a baby is born with teeth (these are generally loose and are removed so they don’t fall out and choke the baby). Teething continues until the child is around two years old and can last until the child is three years old. If it takes much longer than that you may want to visit with a dentist to make sure there aren’t any problems. Generally speaking, the time frame matches up within a family, so it’s genetic, but there are two different families who are being represented in a child, so it can change around with siblings.

Generally--that word is used a lot in the research on teething, that’s because each child is an individual and they like to do things their own way. Generally the teeth come in pairs (two at a time), they will get a total of twenty teeth, so you may get away with only having the teething pain experience as few as ten times. Some babies won’t fuss at all; others will find it quite painful. Generally the first teeth to appear are the two bottom front teeth, then around a month later the four front upper teeth, and about another month later two more bottom teeth flanking the original first two. Next will come molars, then canines (the pointy teeth on the upper jaw), and then the last of the molars.

The human body is really quite incredible. When it prepares for teething it releases a hormone that actually kills the gum cells where the teeth that are ready to come through will be emerging. As those cells die, the gums soften and begin to part and the teeth come through. Because the cells are already dead and aren’t being fed by blood there is very little to no bleeding and risk of infection. Generally speaking, the molars are the most painful because they are wider and need to come through a larger space. Such an incredible process, and yet in the early 1800’s teething was often listed as a cause of death. Babies often died in their first couple of years of life and that’s when they would begin teething so doctors put one and one together and came up with three. However, the misunderstanding of this natural process was sometimes the cause of death as doctors tried to treat the teething process by lancing the gums, using leaches, blistering, and even cauterizing the back of the head. None of these processes would make for a less fussy baby!

Before you begin to address the issue of teething you should make sure that is what you are dealing with. General symptoms include:

- Drooling or a rash on the face caused by the drool
- Decreased appetite (because it hurts)
- Biting (sometimes the pressure helps ease the pain)
- Ear tugging, rubbing, or pulling or rubbing on the cheeks along the jaw

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- Gum rubbing or chewing on the fist
- Sucking on things or chewing on them
- Restless sleeping or irritability
- You can rub your (clean) finger along the gums and feel a tooth starting to come through

Generally the symptoms will begin around four days before the tooth or teeth break through the gums and may last another three days after the tooth or teeth have emerged. The child's symptoms can, however, last up to a month. Additional symptoms may include a mild fever (if it rises to more than 102 chances are you're dealing with more than simple teething and need to look for an illness or infection), diarrhea, runny nose, and cough. These last symptoms are always listed in a traditional holistic treatise and medical studies ignore them (except one that noted a study that showed that there is often a bit of a spike in temperature on the day the tooth comes through). Here's my common sense approach. The temperature thing is covered by science, stress is a well-known cause of diarrhea, if they're crying and fussing they're going to have a runny nose and if they're crying a lot they'll irritate the throat and cause a cough. Now I don't have a PhD, so the fact that these symptoms can be included is just my opinion. Also please note that if your child experiences a large increase in irritability and fussiness don't just assume the problem is teething, this can also indicate a larger problem. Remember, these little ones aren't adept at communicating and we aren't adept at understanding, patience, love, and due diligence are your best friends. If the child shows all of the symptoms they are probably teething, if they are only exhibiting irritability and a couple of other symptoms you may need to look into other causes.

How do I provide relief for my child? There are several things that can help. The number one is patience. I know it's hard when the child is crying a lot, so let's help alleviate the pain. Here's a list of options, you may have to try more than one to find what works for your child.

Essential oils can be your friend. Remember to dilute appropriately and be extremely diligent in ensuring that the essential oil you are exposing your child to is 100% pure. Synthetics and other contaminants can harm an adult body, imagine how much more damage they can do to a small child's body. Here's your dilution recipe:

- Birth to 24 months of age 75% dilution. That's one drop of essential oil to at least three drops of carrier, stir together, then use one drop of the blend you just made on the child.
- 24 months – 36 months old they can have a 50% dilution. That's one drop of essential oil to one drop of carrier, stir together, then use one drop of the blend you just made.
- 36 months and over you can generally use the essential oil without a carrier, but remember that they have delicate skin and (generally speaking) good clean bodies

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- so a little bit goes a very long way and if the oil is a hot one (like Basil, Thyme, Peppermint, Birch, etc) you'll still want to dilute.
- If your child is small for their age use the dilution ratio that their size range would be normal with that age.
 - Always error of the side of caution. If you have a question dilute the essential oil or use more carrier oil.

That being said, here are some essential oils that can help and ways to use them.

- Birch (numbs and reduces swelling)
- Peppermint (numbs, reduces swelling, and cools)
- German or Roman Chamomile (numbs, reduces swelling, and calms)
- Lavender (calms)
- Be Young Spice for Life blend (numbs)
- Clove Bud (a hot oil that should be diluted for an adult, double dilute for a baby) (numbs and reduces swelling)
- Geranium (numbs, calms, and reduces swelling)
- Helichrysum (numbs, reduces swelling)

Ways to use:

- Dilute and apply to the bottom of the feet, paying special attention to the pads by the toes and the tops of the three smallest toes.
- Dilute and rub* a little directly onto the gums. If you are breast feeding you can apply the diluted oil to the nipple and then you both enjoy the benefits.
- Take a trace of the diluted essential oil on a q-tip and apply* to their gums or teeth.
- Dilute the oil, wrap an ice cube in a clean washcloth, then apply the oil to the ice cube area and let the child chew* on the ice cube through the cloth. Note, do not overdo the ice thing. They need to have times when their gums are not exposed to the cold. Some babies don't like cold at all. Some prefer the cloth dipped in cold water as opposed to the ice cube.
- You can use essential oils approximately every two hours. This will vary with the child. If they live in a toxic environment or have health issues you will need to use the oils less often because the oils will assist the body in removing toxins or the body may use the essential oils components to work on healing itself. This can cause a healing crisis, which is not necessarily dangerous, but will increase the stress at this time by essentially giving the child what appears to be flu-like symptoms, the same as will occur in an adult with a healing crisis. Remember, if you get too much of an essential oil, dilute with carrier oil, and don't try to wash off with water. Water will intensify the essential oil's effect; carrier oil will slow it down.

***NEVER** use an essential oil internally that has not been rigorously tested for purity. Be Young brand of essential oils is guaranteed EOBBB (that means that they are tested for

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synthetics, chemicals, and that they have only the correct part(s) of the plant and the essential oils in them). If in doubt, don't use the essential oil. Generally speaking, the price will tell you the quality, if you got it cheap, it is not something you want to eat (or use).

Teething time is often when mothers are first introduced to homeopathy. Chamomilla is the most commonly prescribed remedy, it is used for symptoms that include restlessness and red or flushed cheeks. If the whole face is flushed and a slight fever is present you may find Belladonna is your homeopath of choice. If the child is very sad, clinging to mommy and weepy Pulsatilla may be the homeopath of choice. You may choose to visit with a qualified homeopathic to make your choice. Remember, homeopaths and essential oils don't mix well, keep them separate when you store or use them.

If your baby is developing a rash because of the drooling, simply apply a layer of carrier oil or even petroleum jelly to the area to prevent the moisture from causing the irritation. Gently dab the mouth area to keep it dry with a soft cloth.

If you choose to use a teething ring refrigerate it instead of freezing it. This makes it so the baby isn't chomping down on a rock; it keeps it pliable and soothing. Also be sure that you know what kind of liquid is in it or find one that doesn't have liquid because sometimes they crack open and the baby may swallow the liquid. Watch for damage (broken pieces, jagged edges, etc) that may be a hazard for the baby. If you want to know exactly what's in the liquid, simply put a little water in a pacifier, freeze it like a Popsicle, and you have created your own teether.

Some babies like to chew on a food, make sure they are old enough to know how to deal with foods without choking. Keep a close eye on them, especially if they are crying or fussing because that can increase their chances of choking.

Simply rubbing the baby's gums with your clean finger often provides relief.

Pain relievers can be used with caution. Don't become over dependent upon them, they should not be used often and you need to be vigilant in watching the baby because these can often hide early signs of a more serious problem. The average child will do just fine without them if you use some of the above tools. Generally speaking you want to wait until the child is six months old before using them. The FDA advises against the use of medications because they can cause methemoglobinemia (an inability for cells to carry oxygen). Do not use aspirin products with a baby as it can cause Reye's syndrome. Should you choose to use a teething gel read the instructions carefully, including that long package insert you tend to ignore so that you know exactly what symptoms to look for if there is an allergic reaction or other problem. If the child becomes pale, confused, short of breath or develops a rapid heartbeat seek medical assistance immediately! Be sure you get it only on the gum area and use as little as possible because if it gets in the throat there is a possibility that it can numb the normal gag reflex and allow foods and

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liquid to enter the lungs or they make choke on their own saliva. Read the ingredients and don't use a medication containing benzocaine as it can cause potentially lethal problems in children.

Many dentists recommend brushing the child's teeth as soon as they appear. Should you choose to do this use a very soft bristle brush designed for a baby, or even just a clean washcloth. Do NOT use fluoride toothpaste, most dentists recommend just using water.

Above all, use patience. Remember, if you're losing your cool, give the baby to someone else for a bit. If there is no one else, it is a far better option to put the baby down in the crib to cry and leave the room for a few minutes than to lose your temper with your child. No, you don't want to leave a baby unattended, but if a few minutes alone keep you from shaking or striking a child in a moment of temper it is preferable. Lavender essential oil is a marvelous ally, apply a drop to your pulse points, it will restore your calm, and the aroma will help calm the baby, too.

To order, for class information, or if you have questions contact:

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