Teething

Patient information leaflet

Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your baby's condition.

Most babies start getting their first teeth between 4 and 12 months old. This is called teething. Typically, the bottom front teeth come through first.

Your baby will normally have their full set of teeth at around 2 to 3 years old. You should brush their teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste suitable for their age. You'll need to register your baby with a dentist when their first teeth appear. Seeing an NHS dentist is free for children.

Signs of teething appear 3 to 5 days before a tooth appears. Most signs are mild and do not last long, but teething can be uncomfortable for your baby. Because of this, your baby may:

- eat or sleep less
- have red cheeks or face
- have red and swollen gums
- dribble
- bite, chew or suck on things more often
- rub their gums
- be irritable

Teething does not usually cause diarrhoea or a high temperature. If your child has these symptoms, they may be unwell for another reason, such as an infection.

Treatment

Teething is a normal process. Many babies will have only mild symptoms and will not need any treatment.

How to help your baby feel better

If your baby does have symptoms, you can try soothing them before you give them medicine. You can help them by giving them something clean and cool to chew on. Frozen objects may damage your baby's gums so use the fridge to chill items for chewing.

Safe examples include:

- a chilled, solid teething ring. Do not use liquid or gel rings, as they can leak
- a cold, wet flannel
- chilled raw fruit or vegetables (if your baby has been weaned)

Be cautious of the sugar content of teething biscuits and rusks. Sugar can still cause tooth decay in your child, even if they only have a few teeth.

You can also **soothe** your teething baby by:

- rubbing on their gum with a clean finger
- cuddling and playing with them
- giving them a cool, sugar-free drink
- wiping away excess dribble

To help **prevent choking**, make sure you:

- do not give your baby anything to chew on that might break into hard pieces
- do not tie teething rings around your baby's neck
- stay close when your baby is eating

Treatment

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for your baby.

Pain relief

If your baby is over 3 months old and still in pain after you have tried to soothe the symptoms of teething, **paracetamol** or **ibuprofen** may help. If one doesn't work, you could try swapping to the other one. Make sure to give your child the right dose. You can find this information in the leaflet that comes with the medicine.

Teething gels

You should only use teething gels on your baby if a pharmacist advises you to. While they are available to buy, there is not much proof that they help. They can cause harm.

Not all teething gels are suitable for babies. If you do choose to use a teething gel, make sure it is one that is suitable for young children. Do not use too much. Some teething gels may contain sugars and alcohol. Follow the manufacturer's instructions closely.

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.
If you think a medicine is causing side effects, tell a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects using the Yellow Card app or at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk

When to Get Help

Ask for an urgent **GP** or **111 appointment** if your baby:

- is less than 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or higher

Ask for a same day **GP appointment** or **call 111** if your baby:

- is 3 to 6 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- has a temperature of 38°C for five days or longer
- has diarrhoea for more than 2 days. Or, if they have had more than 6 diarrhoea poos in the last day
- seems to be unwell or in distress

You know your baby best. If you are worried that your baby's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.

More information

For more information on teething or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:
NHS 111 Wales: 111.wales.nhs.uk/teething
NHS: www.nhs.uk/baby/babys-development/teething/
Medicines A-Z: www.nhs.uk/medicines/ look up the name of the medicine you want more information on.
Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.

Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

Version: 2 Published: November 2026
All images taken from Getty Images & Canva Pro

GCFC | WMAS
Gwasanaeth Cyngor ar Feddyginiaethau Cymru
Welsh Medicines Advice Service