

Teething and Biting and Breastfeeding

What happens when your baby gets teeth?

- **Most babies will get their first tooth when they are four to seven months old.** However, some babies will get teeth earlier, or later. Babies often show certain behaviors while “teething” if their gums are sore and swollen. They may drool, bite, or gnaw on toys or fingers, have disrupted sleep, or be irritable. Other babies will get their teeth without any symptoms at all.

What can you do to help your baby be more comfortable during teething?

- You may offer your baby something cold to chew on, such as a wet washcloth or a cold teething toy.

What should you do if your baby should bite you while nursing?

- It is possible for a baby to accidentally bite you while breastfeeding, especially at the end of a feeding. It is a natural reaction for a mom to startle when this happens and quickly pull her baby off her breast. This may discourage your baby from biting again. However, if your baby is startled, your baby may respond by refusing the breast at the next feed, which may then lead to a nursing “strike.”
- If your baby should attempt to bite more than once, **try to stay calm.** Instead, hold your baby close to you while you are nursing, keep your hand close to your baby’s mouth, and pay attention. When your baby’s suckling slows, you may want to take your baby off your breast. This may prevent your baby from “clamping down”. A baby cannot bite while actively suckling.
- If you notice that your baby starts to bite down, you can bring your baby **TOWARD** you, very close to your breast, making it a little harder for your baby to breathe, so baby will need to open her mouth to take a breathe. Another suggestion is to **gently** pinch your baby’s nose closed, which would also cause your baby to come off your breast due to the need to catch their breath.
- Do not be afraid to gently talk to your baby and discourage them from biting. Babies understand the tone of our voice. They may not like what their gums feel like during teething, but they like to breastfeed. They also do not like to be startled while feeding.
- If your baby should bite down and **you notice a small cut or wound on your nipple**, you may apply an antibiotic ointment to your nipple after breastfeeding. Nipples generally heal quickly, and it should not hurt to nurse if your baby is latched deeply. If latching does hurt, you may want to pump for a day or two until you are well healed. Give this milk to your baby in a cup. Babies prefer to suckle over drinking from a cup and this may help your baby to return to your breast when you are ready.



Reviewed: copyright April 2023