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Kids' First Teeth Checklist

From the first tooth to the first sealant: what the ADA recommends, in one printable checklist.

Teething: what is normal

- First teeth usually arrive between 6 and 12 months; most children have all baby teeth by about age 3.
- Normal: fussiness, trouble sleeping, irritability, less appetite, extra drooling.
- Call the pediatrician for fever, diarrhea or a rash.

Safe soothing

- ☐ Rub gums gently with a clean finger, a small cool spoon or moist gauze
- ☐ Offer a solid rubber teether (no liquid-filled rings or breakable plastic)
- ☐ Always supervise a baby with a teether

Skip these (ADA / FDA warnings):

- Teething necklaces and bracelets: reports of strangulation, choking and injury
- Numbing gels with benzocaine or lidocaine for children under 3
- Homeopathic teething tablets

Baby bottle tooth decay: prevention

- ☐ Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle of anything but water
- ☐ Fill bottles only with formula, milk or breast milk (no juice or soft drinks)
- ☐ Wipe gums after each feeding with clean, damp gauze
- ☐ Do not share spoons or clean a pacifier with your own mouth
- ☐ Keep pacifiers clean; never dip them in sugar or honey
- ☐ Move to a cup by the first birthday

Brushing by age

Age	Toothpaste amount (ADA)	Who brushes
First tooth to age 3	Fluoride toothpaste, rice-grain smear	Adult
Ages 3 to 6	Pea-sized amount, twice a day for two minutes	Adult supervises
About 6 or 7	Continue fluoride toothpaste	Supervise until your child reliably spits

Daily routine

- ☐ Brush morning and evening, two minutes each time
- ☐ Use a small, soft-bristled, child-size brush
- ☐ Check that your child spits out rather than swallows toothpaste
- ☐ Limit sugary snacks and drinks between meals

Sealants: the molar shield

- Thin protective coatings on the chewing surfaces of back teeth.
- First molars come in around age 6, second molars around age 12.
- The ADA says sealants can reduce decay risk in molars by nearly 80%.
- Quick and painless; they often last several years and are checked at visits.
- They do not replace brushing and flossing.

Questions to ask your dentist:

- Is my child ready for sealants?
- How often should we come for check-ups?
- Does my child get enough fluoride?
- Does my dental plan cover sealants?

First dental visit

- ☐ Book a visit when the first tooth appears (treat it like a well-baby check-up)
- ☐ Write down feeding habits, pacifier use and any worries
- ☐ Ask about fluoride, brushing technique and bottle-to-cup timing

Your family log

Date	What happened	Notes for the dentist

Sources and next steps

- American Dental Association, MouthHealthy: Teething
- American Dental Association, MouthHealthy: Baby Bottle Tooth Decay
- American Dental Association, MouthHealthy: Sealants
- American Dental Association, MouthHealthy: Fluoride

Next step: book a dental check-up if you have pain, bleeding gums, a suspected cavity or any question this checklist does not answer. Dentists can tailor advice to your mouth, your health and your age.

Last updated: October 2026. Guidance changes over time; check with your dentist and the organizations named above.