

Parents often have general questions that come up as their children grow. Below, Dr. Kay Kim, offers some advice for parents and responds to some of the questions that parents frequently have. Dr. Kim is Board Certified in Pediatric Medicine and is a partner in Community Care Physicians Latham Pediatrics Group located in the Capital Region Health Park in Latham, NY. (518-783-3110). Dr Kim is accepting new patients into her practice and has been providing healthcare services for the children of the Capital District for over twenty years.

QUESTION: My daughter is just over three months old and I think she's begun teething. Is this possible at such an early age? How will I know if my baby is teething?

ANSWER: To answer your question it's first helpful to clarify what we mean by the term "teething". Teething generally refers to the normal process of baby teeth breaking through the gums. There are 20 baby teeth, which are also known as primary teeth, which begin coming through the gums during infancy, usually between 6 and 12 months of age. Most children have all of their primary teeth by the time he or she is about 3 years old.

At around three months old, most babies begin to drool and gnaw. Developmentally, this drooling and gnawing is to be expected and most babies won't cut their first teeth for several more months. Many babies will begin teething about the same time that their parents did. Most older children and adults know that a tooth is erupting because of the discomfort it causes. All babies teething, some babies experience minimal discomfort and some babies become rather uncomfortable. It is not uncommon for symptoms of teething to be present for 3 to 5 days before a tooth breaks through the gum, but these symptoms will generally disappear once the tooth erupts. Symptoms of teething may include:

- Swelling and tenderness at the site of the erupting tooth.
- Increased saliva, which can cause drooling. This drooling may cause a rash to develop on the chin, face, or chest.
- Biting on fingers or toys to try to relieve the gum discomfort.
- Rubbing of ears. The baby may rub his or her ears, but pulling of the ears is not a symptom of teething.
- Refusing to eat and drink because of mouth soreness.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping because of the discomfort.

Your baby's doctor can guide you on techniques for helping relieve the teething discomfort that may occur.

QUESTION: My son is three years old and will soon be outgrowing his car seat. Should I buy a booster seat for him to sit in while riding in the car or can I do without it safely?

ANSWER: Most safety experts agree that a child should transition from a car seat to a booster seat when he weighs about 40 pounds. Kids should continue to ride in a booster seat until the lap/shoulder belts in the car fit properly, usually when the child reaches

about 4'9" tall. The booster seat will raise your son up, so that his lap and shoulder belts fit correctly. You can only use a booster seat where you have a lap and shoulder belt combination.

There is significant evidence that children ranging in age from 4 to 8 years old have fewer injuries when riding in a booster seat than when riding in a seat belt alone. Several organizations have websites that provide child passenger safety information, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.