

Toothache

What is a toothache?

When your child complains of a painful tooth, sometimes it is just a temporarily sensitive tooth. However, it usually means that your child has tooth decay or a cavity. One complication of a decaying tooth is a gumboil just below the gumline. The infection in the tooth may also spread to the face (causing a swollen cheek) or to the lymph node just under the jawbone.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Pain relief medicine** First treat the toothache with acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil). If the pain lasts more than a day or becomes severe, **CALL YOUR DENTIST FIRST!** An ice cube on the tooth or ice pack on the jaw for 20 minutes will also help.
- **Oil of cloves for severe toothache** If you cannot see a dentist for several days and an open cavity is visible, clean all food out of the cavity with a toothpick, Water-Pik, or water in a syringe. Put in a few drops of oil of cloves (80% eugenol). You won't need a prescription to get oil of cloves. If the cavity is large, pack it with a small piece of cotton soaked with oil of cloves. Try to keep the oil of cloves off the tongue because it stings. The cavity can also be temporarily sealed with melted candle wax. Just rub it in with your fingertip.

How can I help my child prevent toothaches?

Remind your child to brush his teeth, especially the back molars, after every meal. After the age of 3 years, when your child is old enough to use toothpaste, be sure to use a fluoride toothpaste. (Children younger than 3 tend to swallow the toothpaste). If your city's water supply doesn't have fluoride added to it, ask your health care provider for a prescription for fluoride during your next routine visit.

When should I call my child's dentist?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- The pain is very severe.
- Your child has a fever (over 100°F, or 37.8°C).
- Your child's face is swollen.
- Your child is acting very sick.

Call during office hours if: **CALL YOUR DENTIST FIRST FOR AN APPOINTMENT - THIS IS A DENTAL ISSUE!**

- Your child has had the pain for more than a day.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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