■ Natal and Neonatal Teeth ■

Parents are sometimes surprised to find that their newborn already has teeth! In other cases, teeth appear during the first month of life. Most of the time, these natal and neonatal teeth are the only abnormality. Much less often, they occur in infants with cleft palate or other uncommon congenital syndromes. The premature teeth can be removed if they are causing pain or any other problems.

What are natal and neonatal teeth?

Natal teeth are teeth that are already present at birth. Teeth developing within the first month after birth are called neonatal teeth. Most of the time, the two lower front teeth are the only ones present. They are usually "wobbly," not firmly attached like normal "baby teeth." Sometimes they are normal teeth that have erupted (come up) early; at other times they are extra (supernumerary) teeth.

Natal and neonatal teeth are more common in babies with cleft palate and may occur in infants with certain congenital (present at birth) syndromes. The rest of the time, they are nothing to worry about. The teeth can be extracted (taken out) if needed, especially if they are causing any injury to the baby's tongue or problems with breast feeding.

What are some possible complications of natal and neonatal teeth?

- There are few or no serious complications of natal or prenatal teeth.
- The most frequent complication is injury or irritation, either of the baby's tongue or of the mother's nipple during breast feeding.
- There is some fear that a natal tooth could come loose, and the baby could aspirate (inhale) it. However, this appears to be rare.

What increases your baby's risk of natal and neonatal teeth?

- If you or any other member of your family had natal or prenatal teeth at birth, your children may be at higher risk.
- Cleft palate or any of the rare congenital syndromes linked to natal and prenatal teeth.

How are natal teeth treated?

- Your child is examined to make sure no other congenital abnormalities (birth defects) are present (for example, cleft palate or other syndromes involving abnormal development of the jaw).
- X-rays may be performed.
- Usually, no treatment is necessary. As long as no other abnormalities are present, natal and neonatal teeth are harmless and cause no serious problems.
- If necessary, the natal or prenatal teeth can simply be extracted (pulled out). This may be easily done because these teeth often aren't fixed in the jaw as firmly as normal teeth. Extraction is more likely to be recommended if the teeth are causing any injury to the baby's tongue or problems with breast-feeding or if they are very loose.
- If the teeth are left in, keep an eye on them at home. No special care is required; just wipe them with a clean cloth (the same as for regular baby teeth when they appear).

📱 When should I call your office?

Call our office if:

- Natal or prenatal teeth seem to be causing your baby any discomfort or pain, especially if you notice a cut or other injury on the tongue.
- Natal or prenatal teeth are causing problems with breast feeding.
- The teeth become loose.