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SHARK TEETH:

When do I need to be concerned?

FOR DR. ROZE BIOHEALTH CLINICS | 02 September 2022

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Shark teeth" (termed this way because sharks have rows of teeth one behind the other) are when the new permanent (or adult) tooth grows in before the baby (or milk) tooth becomes wobbly and falls out.

The permanent tooth has no space to grow in so it emerges behind the baby tooth. Shark teeth usually appear in the mouths of children aged 6-8 years and you may notice them on either the top or bottom rows of teeth.

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How are baby teeth replaced?

- As the adult teeth erupt out of the gums, it will encourage the roots of the baby teeth to dissolve. With Shark Teeth, the roots have not dissolved quickly enough resulting in two rows of teeth.
- Typically, it is only a matter of time before the adult teeth naturally replace it hence, in most cases no treatment is necessary.
- Encourage your child to wiggle the baby tooth daily (with their finger or tongue) to loosen it to avoid it causing discomfort to your child when eating.
- In some cases, you may notice the adult teeth are almost at the same height as the baby teeth and there is still limited movement in the baby teeth or they may become sore, irritable and inflamed. When this happens, you should bring your child in to have it checked at the dentist where they may need a little help to have the baby tooth extracted

What should I do if I see my child has shark teeth coming in?

1. If you see this second row of teeth starting to appear, please do not panic. This situation is quite common especially in the lower set of teeth in children in this age group.
2. The condition usually corrects itself and the adult tooth will gradually move into the place when the baby tooth falls out so your child may not require any further treatment.
3. You may find that the baby tooth in front is slightly loose.
4. We recommend that you encourage this tooth to fall out by wiggling it now and again to further loosen it.
5. If there are 2 or more teeth that have the shark tooth condition, the same can apply.
6. In the situation where the baby tooth is holding fast and will not loosen, you should talk to your dentist or paediatric dentist.

7. He/she will be able assess if the baby tooth will cause the permanent tooth any stress. In this case, intervention may be required such as removal of the baby tooth so that the permanent one can quickly move into the correct space.

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What should I do if the adult teeth are not moving into place?

When your child’s baby tooth is finally lost, the adult tooth will eventually start to push forward in line with the other teeth due to the pressure in the mouth and tongue.

If you find that the tooth is not moving into place after a month or so, or that there seems to be no space available for the tooth to line in with the others, please talk to your dentist or paediatric specialist.

Although it is difficult to completely assess if there will be crowding once all permanent teeth are in their final positions, by visting your dentist or paediatric specialist for your regular appointments, we will be able to see the movement during this transitional period and monitor your child’s development. We will know early on if orthodontics will be necessary to make sure your child’s smile is in perfect alignment.



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