

the crown of the tooth breaks through the periodontal membrane. Some children show minimum evidence of teething, such as drooling, increased finger sucking, or biting on hard objects. Others are irritable, have difficulty sleeping, ear rubbing, and decreased interest in solid foods. Generally, signs of illness such as fever ($>39^{\circ}\text{C}$), vomiting, or diarrhea are not symptoms of teething but of illness and may warrant further investigation. Because teething pain is a result of inflammation, cold is soothing. Giving the child a frozen teething ring helps relieve the inflammation, but do not freeze teething rings filled with gels or non-sterile water because they may crack and leak into the infant's mouth. Several nonprescription topical anesthetic ointments are available, although the active ingredient in most of them is benzocaine, which may cause a rare but serious disorder called *methemoglobinemia*. Therefore, the US Food and Drug Administration recommends use of such products only under the advice and supervision of a health care provider ([US Food and Drug Administration, 2014](#)). In the event of persistent irritability that affects sleeping and feeding, systemic analgesics (such as, acetaminophen or ibuprofen) can be given (if age appropriate) for no more than 3 days; however, parents should know that this is a temporary measure, and they should contact the practitioner if symptoms persist or if the child's condition changes.

The use of teething powders or procedures such as cutting or rubbing the gums with salicylates (aspirin) is discouraged because ingestion of the powder, infection or irritation of the tissue, and ingestion or aspiration of the aspirin can occur. Hard candy may cause accidental choking or aspiration and should be avoided at this age.

Promoting Optimal Health During Infancy

Nutrition

Ideally, discussion of optimal nutrition should begin prenatally with a discussion regarding maternal intake of adequate nutrition in the form of a balanced diet and adequate amounts of protein,