



Drooling and Your Baby

Drooling and blowing bubbles is common in babies during the phase of development when getting what they need is centered on the mouth. This becomes especially apparent at 3 to 6 months of age. The increased flow of saliva that often signals the appearance of a new tooth (</English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/Teething-4-to-7-Months.aspx>) seems to soothe tender gums; however, if your baby appears to be drooling excessively and looks ill, she may be having trouble swallowing, which requires medical attention.



The Role of Saliva

Drooling fulfills several important functions for your baby.

- Softens and moistens food once solids (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx>) are part of your baby's diet
- Keeps your baby's mouth moist
- Makes it easier for your baby him to swallow
- Washes away food residues
- Protects your baby's teeth

Saliva also contains ptyalin, a digestive enzyme that changes starch into sugar. A natural antacid in saliva neutralizes stomach acid and aids digestion. Saliva also protects against tooth decay (</English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx>).

Warning!

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If your child is suddenly drooling, can't speak, and is having trouble breathing, she may be choking on food or a foreign object. Call 911 or your local emergency number, and while you're waiting for help, follow the first aid procedures

First Aid Procedures Related to Choking

Your Concerns:	Possible Cause:	Action to Take:
<i>Your infant is between 3 and 6 months of age. He is a little fussy, and he seems to want to chew and bite on firm objects, including your fingers.</i>	• Normal drooling	Comfort your baby, and give him a pacifier or a smooth teething ring to chew on.
<i>Your child has a fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher, a headache, and a sore throat. She has lost her appetite. She has pain on swallowing, and the glands in her neck are swollen.</i>	• Viral infection of the throat or mouth • Streptococcal throat infection • Tonsillitis (inflammation of the tonsils)	Call your pediatrician, who will examine your child and recommend treatment. If your pediatrician agrees, give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce her fever.
<i>Your child has spots or ulcerations inside of his mouth. He finds them painful.</i>	• Viral infection of the tongue or gums such as hand-foot- and-mouth disease • Herpes	Call your pediatrician, who will recommend treatment.
<i>Your drooling child is straining and gasping for air with his mouth wide open. She has a severe sore throat.</i>	• Epiglottitis (inflammation of the flap of tissue that prevents food and liquids from entering the trachea [windpipe])	Call 911 or your local emergency number, or take your child to the nearest hospital emergency department. This condition is serious and could cause your child to stop breathing. Once a grave threat, it has become less common since the introduction of the Hib vaccine for children.
<i>Your child's face is turning blue. He is speechless; making short, loud noises; and trying to cough.</i>	• Choking	This is an emergency. Have someone else call 911 or your local emergency number while you start the Heimlich maneuver or chest compressions on your baby. If your child stops breathing and has no pulse, start CPR and keep it up until medical help arrives. For instructions on how to handle these emergencies, see page 215 or 216, depending on your child's age.
<i>Your child has passed out. Her limbs and muscles are jerking and can't be controlled.</i>	• Seizure	During the seizure, make sure your child is safe from objects that could injure her. Don't leave your child, but call your pediatrician as soon as possible, and follow his or her instructions.

related to choking.

Additional Information on HealthyChildren.org:

- Choking Prevention (/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Choking-Prevention.aspx)
- Starting Solid Foods (/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx)
- How to Prevent Tooth Decay in Your Baby (/English/ages-stages/baby/teething-tooth-care/Pages/How-to-Prevent-Tooth-Decay-in-Your-Baby.aspx)

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.