

When Children Start Losing Baby Teeth: A Parent's Timeline

By JoD Family & Parenting · 6 min read

There is a particular kind of excitement in a household when a child wiggles a tooth for the first time. For parents, though, the milestone often comes with a flurry of questions. Is five too early? Is eight too late? Why is that tooth coming in behind the baby one? And is any of this something to worry about?

The short answer is that losing baby teeth is a normal, drawn-out process that unfolds over several years, and children vary a great deal in their timing. This is a gentle timeline to help you know roughly what to expect, along with the handful of moments when a quick check with your dentist is a good idea.

Why baby teeth come out at all

A child's first set of teeth, sometimes called primary teeth, are placeholders. Beneath them, permanent teeth are forming and slowly moving upward. As a permanent tooth pushes toward the surface, the roots of the baby tooth above it gradually dissolve. Eventually the baby tooth has so little holding it in place that it wobbles free, often with a bit of help from an enthusiastic tongue.

This is why loose baby teeth usually do not bleed much and rarely hurt. The body has already done most of the work of loosening them from underneath.

A rough timeline

Most children lose their first tooth somewhere around age six, though starting a year earlier or later is common and usually nothing to read into. Children who got their baby teeth early often lose them early, and the reverse holds too.

The general order tends to mirror the order the teeth first came in:

- **Around 6–7 years:** the bottom front teeth (central incisors) usually go first, followed by the top front teeth.
- **Around 7–8 years:** the teeth on either side of the front teeth (lateral incisors).

- **Around 9–12 years:** the first molars, canines, and second molars, roughly in that window, with plenty of overlap.

By around age 12 or 13, most children have lost all their baby teeth, though the last few can linger. Treat these ages as a loose guide rather than a schedule to measure your child against.

A note on "shark teeth"

One sight that alarms many parents is a permanent tooth erupting behind a baby tooth that has not yet fallen out, creating a brief double row. It is common enough to have earned the nickname "shark teeth," and it most often sorts itself out as the baby tooth loosens and comes free. If the baby tooth is not budging after a few weeks, or the permanent tooth is well in and the baby tooth is still firm, it is worth having a dentist take a look.

Helping a loose tooth along

When a tooth is genuinely ready, it usually comes out with minimal fuss. A few things help:

- Let your child do the wiggling with a clean finger or tongue. Gentle movement encourages it along.
- Avoid yanking a tooth that is still firmly attached, which can be uncomfortable and may cause bleeding.
- If a tooth bleeds a little once it is out, a clean gauze or cloth and light pressure for a few minutes usually settles it.
- Keep up brushing around the loose tooth and the new gap, which can be tender but still needs cleaning.

Crunchy, healthy snacks like apple slices can make a genuinely ready tooth pop out naturally, which many children find more fun than frightening.

When to check with a dentist

Most of the time, baby teeth coming and going needs no professional input beyond regular visits. A few situations are worth raising, not because they usually signal a problem, but because a dentist can reassure you or step in early if needed:

- No teeth lost by around age seven or eight, especially if permanent teeth seem to be arriving.
- A baby tooth knocked out early by a fall or injury, which is different from natural loss.
- A permanent tooth that is well in while the baby tooth stays firmly in place.
- Pain, swelling, or a tooth that seems loose for no clear reason.

- Crowding or spacing that has you wondering about future alignment.

Routine check-ups during these years do a lot of quiet work: tracking which teeth are on the way, watching for crowding, and keeping an eye on the new permanent teeth as they settle in. A practice that offers [children's dentistry](#) can monitor this stage over time, and MiNa Family Dentistry in Thornhill is one example of a local option for families who want the same team following a child from the first wobbly tooth onward. Every child develops differently, so an in-person look is the best way to answer specific worries.

Caring for the new permanent teeth

The permanent molars and front teeth that arrive during these years are meant to last into adulthood, so they are worth protecting from the start. The grown-up teeth often come in looking larger, a little more yellow than the bright baby teeth beside them, and sometimes with ridged edges that smooth down with use. All of this is normal. Keeping up twice-daily brushing and cleaning between teeth, and easing off very frequent sugary snacks, gives those new teeth a solid beginning.

Frequently asked questions

What age do kids usually lose their first tooth?

Most children lose their first tooth around age six, but anywhere from about five to seven is common. Children who teethed early as babies often lose teeth earlier, and later teething tends to start later. Timing on its own is rarely a cause for concern.

What order do baby teeth fall out in?

They usually fall out in roughly the order they came in: the bottom front teeth first, then the top front teeth, followed by the teeth beside them, and later the canines and molars. The whole process typically wraps up by around age twelve or thirteen.

Should I pull a loose tooth out?

It is best not to force a tooth that is still firmly attached. Let your child gently wiggle it, and it will usually come free on its own when ready. If a tooth stays very loose and uncomfortable for a long time, or something seems off, ask your dentist.

Sources & further reading

- [Canadian Dental Association — Dental Care for Children](#) — guidance on children's teeth and development

- [Government of Canada — Oral health](#) — family oral care resources

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