

Queries on Tooth Transition

The advent of the tooth transition period means that your child has advanced into another stage of development. As parents, you must be delighted to see it happen. However, do you or your child have any concerns regarding tooth transition?

What is the tooth transition period?

During tooth transition period, the deciduous teeth will begin to wiggle. They will eventually shed one by one and subsequently the permanent teeth underneath will in turn erupt into their spaces. It is a time when both the deciduous teeth and the permanent teeth are simultaneously present in the mouth. This mixed dentition period normally lasts from the age of 6 until approximately the age of 12.

The general eruption sequence of the permanent dentition:

Between 6-8 years of age, the first permanent molars will erupt and the deciduous incisors will gradually be replaced by the permanent incisors.

Between 8.5-14 years of age, the canines, premolars and second molars will erupt to replace their deciduous predecessors.

The third molars (wisdom teeth) will erupt between 17-25 years of age, but it varies in different individuals. They may or may not erupt.

Which is the permanent tooth that erupts quietly without any predecessor?



At around 6 years of age, the first permanent molars will erupt directly

behind the second deciduous molars at the 4 corners of the mouth. They are also known as the "six-year molars".

Research has shown that over 80% of decayed permanent teeth are the "six-year molars". Most of them become decayed soon after eruption. The main reason is that children are unaware of their presence and hence neglect to care for them. Therefore, parents should make sure that their children brush these teeth at the corners of the mouth properly with toothpaste. Parents should also remember to bring their children to visit the dentist once a year for check-up in order to keep their teeth healthy.

Why do the new incisors have serrated edges?



It is normal for new incisors to have serrated edges or "mamelons". They will usually be worn down and flattened after some time.



If there is a gap between the two permanent incisors in the front when they erupt and they seem to be flared, does my child need braces?

Some dentists refer to this condition as the "ugly duckling stage". This is only a transitional stage. Under normal circumstances, as the jaw matures and grows and the canines erupt, the incisors will straighten up and the gap will be closed. Meanwhile, no braces are needed.



If the permanent incisors erupt before the shedding of deciduous incisors, do the deciduous incisors need to be removed?

Generally speaking, deciduous teeth will shed and be replaced by permanent teeth. The tongue will gradually push the permanent teeth forward to the normal positions in the dental arch. At the same time, the deciduous incisors will become loosened and fall out, therefore, there is no need to remove the deciduous incisors.



If the permanent incisors are crooked, is there a need to remove the neighbouring deciduous teeth in order to straighten the incisors?

Since the permanent teeth are larger than the deciduous teeth, and if the jaw growth has not caught up with the eruption of the permanent teeth, there will not be enough room for a straight alignment and the permanent teeth will temporarily be crowded out. We can determine if true crowding exists only after the permanent premolars have erupted and the growth of jaw bones is stabilized. Meanwhile if you have any queries, you can discuss it with your dentist.



When is the most suitable time for braces (orthodontic treatment)?

Normally, orthodontic treatment is needed when it is certain that there is a malalignment after the eruption of all permanent teeth and the full development of the jaw bone.

Will the deciduous teeth which are delayed in shedding interfere with the proper alignment of the permanent teeth?

Since the deciduous teeth are tiny, their roots are resorbing and the teeth are loosening, they cannot interfere with the alignment of permanent teeth.

There may be many unforeseen situations during tooth transition. Fortunately, most of them are transitional. If you have any queries, you should consult your dentist. He/ She would observe and follow-up with your child's dentition and give appropriate advice to you.

