



SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT BABY TEETH

BY DR. ELI GHERMAN, DDS

1. MY CHILD'S BABY TEETH ARE SUCH A NICE BRIGHT WHITE COLOR. NOW HIS ADULT TEETH ARE COMING IN AND THEY LOOK YELLOW ALREADY!

Baby teeth are called milk teeth because they usually are very white; thus, the adult teeth tend to look relatively more yellow; this is normal. Of course, if the color or texture is really odd looking, you should check it out with your general dentist.

2. I HEARD ALL BABY TEETH SHOULD BE OUT BEFORE BRACES. IS THIS TRUE?

No, this is not true. Very often the baby tooth won't fall out because the adult tooth is going in the wrong direction or is being blocked. Usually your general dentist will see this early on, but sometimes a baby tooth can look "adult-like" and the adult tooth is higher or lower than the general dentist x-ray which is focused on looking for cavities. Thus, it can be extremely difficult to diagnose. After a while, the baby tooth stays there, and even if your dentist told you it is a baby tooth and to see the orthodontist, parents often attribute it to a family history of teeth coming in late, plus the misconception that we wait to do anything until all baby teeth are out. So why go to the orthodontist now? Well, at some point the patient comes in and, after taking a special orthodontic x-ray, we see that the baby tooth never fell out because the adult tooth was growing in the wrong direction and so it couldn't push the baby tooth out. This is an important discovery for it allows for simpler actions early on such as removing the baby tooth, wearing a simple orthodontic appliance or temporary braces for as little as 4 months thereby avoiding very com-

plicated treatments later on. Other scenarios include missing adult teeth, or baby teeth that are "stuck" or ankylosed. Another reason often cited for seeing an orthodontist before all the baby teeth fall out is that it facilitates the use of what is called the "E" space that opens just as the narrower adult bicuspid pushes out the baby molar. It sounds funny, but orthodontists love that space to help align the teeth.

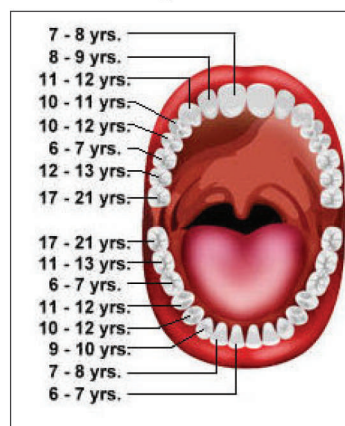
3. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE TOOTH FAIRY?

No comment.

What I will say is that there is a range of time when our adult teeth come in. (See chart.) However, if you notice that an adult tooth is coming in, while on the other side the same adult tooth

is nowhere to be found or there is still a baby tooth, you should visit the orthodontist.

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