



# April Dental Digest

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## My Tooth is Loose!

Those words represent a big milestone in your child's life. Baby teeth have to fall out to make way for permanent teeth to grow – a process that continues until the final molars (also called wisdom teeth) are in. This can take until your child is anywhere from age 17 to 21.

Most kids are excited to feel a tooth wiggle (and perhaps get a visit from the tooth fairy), while some worry it will hurt when the tooth falls out. If your child is a worrier, you can reassure them that they probably won't feel anything.

### First In First Out

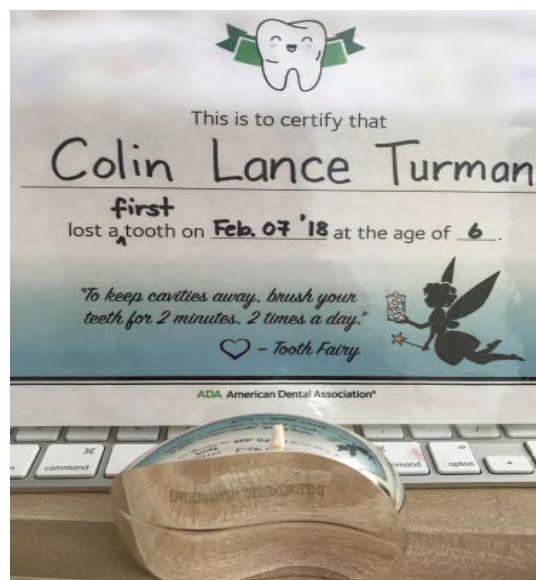
A child's 20 baby teeth, which often come in by age 3, usually fall out in the same order they came in. That means the lower center teeth are usually the first to go, around age 6 or 7. The top center pair is next.

A baby tooth typically doesn't loosen until the permanent tooth below pushes it up to take its place. But it is possible for kids to lose a baby tooth before the permanent tooth is ready to erupt, especially because of an accident or dental disease. In this case, sometimes a pediatric dentist will put a custom-fit plastic placeholder (spacer) in until the adult tooth is ready to emerge. This prevents future spacing problems.

Some children lose their first tooth as early as 4 or as late as 7. Generally, the younger the child was when the teeth came in, the earlier they fall out. If your child begins to lose teeth before 4, consult a dentist to make sure there's no underlying problem. It's also possible for a child to reach age 7 or 8 without losing any baby teeth. There's probably nothing wrong, but it never hurts to check in with your child's dentist to make sure.

### Out With The Old

Encourage your child to gently wiggle a wobbly tooth. (Some loose teeth can actually be rotated because the root underneath has almost completely disintegrated.) Remind your child **not** to yank a tooth before it's ready.



“ Can we use the same tooth over and over again, so we can trick the tooth fairy to come every night? “

By Colin Turman  
Age : 6 yrs old

## In With The New

The new teeth may look bigger, especially those first few. That's because they are! Adult teeth also tend to be less white than baby teeth and have pronounced ridges because they haven't been used yet for biting and chewing.

In rare cases, a couple of new teeth come in before the old ones are gone, creating two rows of pearly whites. This is a temporary stage, sometimes called shark's teeth.

If your 6- or 7-year-old complains of soreness in the back of his mouth, it's probably the first permanent molars coming in. (They have no baby teeth there to fall out first). Ibuprofen or acetaminophen can ease the ache, though it's unlikely to last long.

Brushing is now more important than ever. You'll probably need to supervise the process until your child is around 8. Replace toothbrushes every three or four months (sooner if the bristles are frayed) to reduce harmful bacteria and keep them working their best. And make sure your child sees a dentist twice a year to keep those new pearly whites in tip-top shape!

## What Not To Do

Now that you know what to do, here are some things to avoid when your child loses his or her teeth:

- Show alarm when the tooth falls out
- Wiggle or pull a tooth prematurely
- Forget to keep regular dental appointments
- Make tooth care a forced and negative experience

By following these simple steps, you've put you and your child on the path to tooth losing success and tooth fairy expertise.

## Tooth Fairy Traditions to Try at Home

Families often have their own Tooth Fairy traditions. You may have heard of parents who decorate their children's rooms with glitter, or "fairy dust." It's not uncommon for parents to make Tooth Fairy footprints in the glitter. Some parents purchase Tooth Fairy pillows online. There are even complete kits that include Tooth Fairy receipts!

You may want to try one of these ideas:

- Spray glitter on a dollar bill to leave under the pillow.
- Leave a fun, new vibrating toothbrush and kids' flavored toothpaste.
- Ask the bank to order gold plated coins to place under the pillow.
- Leave the tooth in clear water at bedtime and add food coloring and glitter while your child is sleeping.

**Remember:** Your reactions will determine whether losing teeth becomes a positive or negative experience for your child. Make it a positive experience so the process will go that much smoother in the future.