

WHY DO CHILDREN HAVE SPACES BETWEEN THEIR TEETH?

Spaces between a child's teeth are often a normal stage of development. In some cases spaces may indicate missing or extra teeth as well as abnormally positioned teeth.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What causes spaces in children's teeth?*

It is normal for children to have spaces when baby teeth are present. Adult teeth are larger than baby teeth and the spaces between the baby teeth allow room for the larger adult teeth.

2. *What causes spaces in children's adult teeth?*

The following are reasons spaces may exist between your child's adult teeth:

- A difference in the jaw size and tooth size. The jaw size can be too large and the tooth size can be too small causing the teeth to have extra space between them.
- An adult tooth does not fully develop, resulting in a smaller than normal tooth.
- An adult tooth is missing. This is called a "congenitally missing tooth" and occurs in about 5% of the population.
- An adult tooth never erupts but is present in the jaw.
- A space between the two front teeth can be caused by the attachment of a dense piece of gum tissue that runs between the teeth.
- A tooth developing under the gum pushes against roots of the teeth that are present causing the teeth to look "splayed"; this situation is a normal stage of growth and development and will resolve as all of your child's adult teeth grow into the mouth.

3. *What do I do if my child's teeth have spaces?*

It is normal with baby teeth to have spaces so no treatment is necessary. If spaces exist between your child's adult teeth, your dentist can determine the reason for the spaces and recommend specific treatment options.

4. *What will happen if I do nothing about the spaces?*

Spaces can sometimes cause food to trap between the teeth and this can increase the risk of decay if not treated. Once all the permanent teeth have fully erupted, any existing spaces will most likely remain unless they are treated. Spaces between the teeth may be more of an esthetic problem, rather than something that affects your child's oral health.