Redwood Pediatric Dentistry
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Over-Retained Baby Teeth: “Shark Teeth”

Seeing a double row of teeth is surprisingly common, and usually nothing to worry about! Here’s what’s happening and what to do

1 What’s Going On?

When an adult tooth grows in **directly behind a baby tooth** rather than pushing up underneath it, the baby tooth doesn’t get the signal to loosen and fall out. The result is a double row of teeth, sometimes called “shark teeth.”

Normally, the adult tooth erupts **underneath** the baby tooth and **dissolves its root**, causing it to loosen and fall out. When the adult tooth comes in behind instead, the tongue pushes on it as it erupts and naturally guides it forward into the correct position over time.



2 What to Do at Home

- **Encourage wiggling:** Have your child wiggle the baby tooth as much as possible. The looser it gets, the sooner it comes out.
- **Try the popsicle trick:** If the tooth is loose, press a popsicle against it for 30 seconds, then wiggle for 30 seconds. Repeat as comfortable. The cold numbs the area and makes wiggling easier.
- **Give it a few weeks:** Most baby teeth will fall out on their own within 4 weeks once you start working on it.
- **When to make an appointment:** If the tooth hasn’t come out within about a month, call us and Dr. Franklin can evaluate whether it needs a simple extraction. Most parents prefer to wait and try first.

3 Wait & Watch vs. Call Us



The “unicorn tooth”: If a **top** front adult tooth is erupting behind the baby tooth, Dr. Franklin recommends an earlier extraction to prevent a crossbite from developing. This is the one situation where we don’t want to wait.

4 What About the Long Term?

- **The tongue does the work:** Once the baby tooth is gone, the tongue naturally pushes the adult tooth forward into position over the following weeks. No appliance needed in most cases.
- **Crowding assessment at age 8:** Once your child has most of their adult front teeth (around age 8), Dr. Franklin will assess whether the pattern suggests crowding that warrants an orthodontic consultation.
- **Orthodontics later:** Children with significant crowding may not have enough room for adult teeth to fully move forward and may need orthodontic guidance in the future. Shark teeth alone don't require early braces.
- **Timing of first teeth:** Children typically lose their first baby teeth between **ages 5 to 7**. If teeth seem very late to fall out, mention it at your next visit.

We're always happy to take a look!

If you're ever unsure or just want some reassurance, give us a call. We can often answer quick questions over the phone or schedule a short evaluation if needed.

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References

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4. Hegde S, Panwar S. Mandibular incisor eruption sequence and crowding: a review. J Int Soc Prev Community Dent. 2014;4(Suppl 3):S180-S185.

Disclaimer: All information reflects the clinical approach of Dr. Niekia Franklin and is intended for general guidance only. Instructions given during your visit always take precedence. • www.redwoodpediatricdentist.com