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Is It Safe to Wiggle a Loose Tooth?

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My daughter Katie's first baby tooth came out in a spoonful of Nutella. And she lost the second one backstage at a play when she bumped a chair against her mouth by accident. She had gauze in her mouth until seconds before she had to perform.

By the time the third tooth got loose, she was pretty brazen about it. She wiggled it. She let kids at school wiggle it. And I worried whether all that twisting and turning would make the tooth come out before it was ready, so I asked her to leave it alone and let nature take its course. The tooth fairy did visit, and she has visited a couple of more times since then.

But since Katie has 12 more of her 20 baby teeth to lose, I knew this issue would come up again. So I called **Rhea Haugseth, dentist and president of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, for some advice.**

"My daughter is obsessed with wiggling a loose tooth. Is that helpful or harmful?" I asked.

"Most kids can't resist," said Haugseth, assuring me that Katie's behavior is normal. "It's fine to go after it. It's actually even good."

Haugseth explained that even wiggling a baby tooth wouldn't make it come out before it's ready. "By the time a child feels that a tooth is loose, the roots of the baby tooth have dissolved and only the gum tissue is holding it in its place," she said. "In fact, if it's left in there too long -- because some children may be scared to wiggle it -- the surrounding gums can get inflamed and irritated. That's when parents call me."

"So what do you recommend if a child is scared to wiggle her tooth?"

“I tell moms to accidentally bump into it when they’re helping their child brush their teeth,” she says. “And if that doesn’t work, a conversation about what the tooth fairy might bring works wonders.”

By Karen Cicero for [Completely You](#)