

The Deciduous Teeth.

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The deciduous teeth in man are twenty in number: four incisors, two cuspids, and four molars in each jaw. They do not appear till a few months after birth normally, but occasionally a child is born having one or two teeth above the gum. Marcus Curius is said to have been born with a full set in each jaw.

The time at which the temporary teeth appear is subject to some variation, but the following table will be found to be approximately correct:-- Centrals, sixth month; laterals, ninth month; first molars, twelfth month; cuspids, eighteenth month; second molars, twenty-second month.

The inferior centrals are the first to appear, and are followed a month or six weeks later by the superior centrals and laterals; the inferior laterals appear about a month later (*i.e.*, the ninth month). Then there is a rest of about four months, after which the first molars appear, followed by another rest of six months, and then the cuspids are cut. The cuspids are peculiar, in that they come *between* teeth already in place, and the eruption is slow and very painful. About two months later the second molars appear, so that all the deciduous teeth are usually erupted before the end of the second year.

There has been much discussion as to the kind of force which pushes the teeth through the gum. One theory is, that as the teeth grow up more dentine is added to the root, but this does not seem to be sustained by observation, *e.g.*, teeth with very stunted roots are often erupted, while some fully developed teeth may remain in the jaw for years and then begin to erupt: this is especially true of third molars.

The calcification of the roots of the deciduous teeth is not completed until some months after eruption; the laterals being the first (about the twelfth month after birth), and the second molars the last (about twenty-two months after birth). The roots are completed a little more than one year before absorption begins. The following is the order given by Tomes: Centrals, about the fourth year; fifth year in laterals; ninth year in cuspids; seventh year in first molars, and eighth year in second molars. Absorption goes on till the roots have entirely disappeared and the crown becomes loose and falls off. Absorption of the deciduous teeth is thought to be entirely independent of pressure from the developing permanent teeth. That the absorption of the root depends on the vitality of the pulp is shown by the fact that when the pulp dies absorption is arrested.