

## Sawbones Episode 45: Teething

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### **Intro (Clint McElroy):**

*Sawbones*, is a show about medical history and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion, it's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil, we think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth, you're worth it.

[theme song Medicines by The Taxpayers plays]

### **Justin:**

Hello everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. I am your cohost, Justin McElroy.

### **Sydnee:**

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

### **Justin:**

Syd, the nursery's just about done, but I forgot, uh, I still need to get, uh, plugs for the outlets.

### **Sydnee:**

Oh, like the little safety, the protector, the little-

### **Justin:**

Like you stuff in.

### **Sydnee:**

... the little plastic things?

### **Justin:**

It is so much-

### **Sydnee:**

We should probably learn the name for that.

**Justin:**

The plastic things.

**Sydnee:**

At some point. The plastic thingy that goes in the holes in the outlet.

**Justin:**

I think you can... Your house can be unsafe at first, 'cause where's that kid gonna go? He didn't, she didn't, not gonna go anywhere I don't tell her to go.

**Sydnee:**

That's true. I can't see... She won't really be able to like roll-

**Justin:**

Or do anything.

**Sydnee:**

... at first. So I can't see her being able to get to the outlets. It's probably safer just to do it ahead of time, would be my thought.

**Justin:**

Probably. 'Cause then you got a kid later.

**Sydnee:**

Did they even make two prong ones? 'Cause all our outlets are only two prong, which is just the biggest pain in the butt.

**Justin:**

We'll get an adapter to put.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] A three prong to two prong plastic adapter safety device.

**Justin:**

You know, it's so much, it's so much harder I think to raise kids these days than it would've been in olden times, you know like we have. Uh, there's like, well there's electricity in the walls, like we just put a, a lethal substance in our walls now.

**Sydnee:**

Well, I mean it's in wires, like it- I think.

**Justin:**

I know, but it's like being pumped-

**Sydnee:**

Some kind of like.

**Justin:**

Through the walls.

**Sydnee:**

But I don't think like the walls are just filled with electricity, that's kind of a crazy thing you just said.

**Justin:**

And then you got, you got Wi-Fi to worry about in the air all around, what's that doing to you? I did not have that going through me when I was a baby.

**Sydnee:**

Is that, is that a worry, do you think?

**Justin:**

Wi-Fi is everywhere, what effect does it have on babies? I don't know, I wasn't a baby then.

**Sydnee:**

It gives them sweet, sweet internet everywhere they go.

**Justin:**

My baby is internet enabled everywhere without a device. She was born in Wi-Fi. She'll be the first baby to be born since Wi-Fi. And I think is gonna, has unpredictable effects.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, we'll need to, we'll figure, we'll talk about that later.

**Justin:**

All am saying is that the world is a lot scarier now than it was, you know, 200, 300 years ago.

**Sydnee:**

Well, to be fair there's, there's one thing that was listed as a, a decent, a pretty decently large cause of infant mortality that, uh, we wouldn't put on that list today.

**Justin:**

What's that?

**Sydnee:**

Teething!

**Justin:**

Wait, what?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, teething. I mean, yes, of course, you know, teething is still a thing, babies still, yeah, teethe.

**Justin:**

Yeah, 'cause they have still, they still have teeth.

**Sydnee:**

Right. And like we have teeth.

**Justin:**

We're not so futuristic now that it's like, food pills that you just swallow and we've evolved away from teeth.

**Sydnee:**

Right. Teeth have become vestigial.

**Justin:**

Right. "What are this, mommy, what are the hard things in my mouth for?"

**Sydnee:**

"Don't worry someday you'll be evolved enough that you won't need them."

**Justin:**

"Can you pass the food glue mother?"

**Sydnee:**

That's not how evolution works.

**Justin:**

“Pass the tube of food glue mother.”

**Sydnee:**

But teething, although, uh, still a thing, is not, uh, listed as a cause of infant mortality anymore.

**Justin:**

Why was it ever? Your teeth just come in. It's like not, it just, they just come in!

**Sydnee:**

Well, let me give you a little history about teeth, how about that?

**Justin:**

Yeah, explain it 'cause I don't know how we got this one this wrong.

**Sydnee:**

Okay. So first of all, you need to understand what teething is.

**Justin:**

I think I do but go ahead.

**Sydnee:**

Do you understand it?

**Justin:**

I feel like I do but go ahead.

**Sydnee:**

Okay, so it's getting teeth.

**Justin:**

Okay. Yeah. I did have a pretty good, uh, concept of it.

**Sydnee:**

You know, your first teeth can be called... They were uh, colloquially, colloquially known as your milk teeth.

**Justin:**

Milk teeth?

**Sydnee:**

Milk teeth.

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

But, uh, they're also called scientifically your deciduous teeth.

**Justin:**

[laughs] 'Cause I'm gonna replace 'em?

**Sydnee:**

Because they fall off like leaves on a deciduous tree.

**Justin:**

Oh, fantastic.

**Sydnee:**

Which is not how the teeth losing process works, they don't just like drift-

**Justin:**

"My time is done."

**Sydnee:**

... pleasantly in the breeze out of your mouth.

**Justin:**

"My time is through."

**Sydnee:**

They turn.

**Justin:**

"I've, I've turned brown."

**Sydnee:**

They turn brown.

**Justin:**

"And now I'm going litter the ground and it's like a, it's like a, uh, uh, a scene from Hellraiser in here, it's terrifying. The ground just littered with ashen baby teeth."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] That probably would've been easier on you though if they just kind of drifted out of your mouth.

**Justin:**

Yeah, it would be easier on me 'cause it's like the worst thing that happened to me.

**Sydnee:**

'Cause it, it was pretty traumatic for you, right?

**Justin:**

Oh, my God. I've often said that like, I've had a lot of terrible things happen to me in my life, a lot of great things but like the reason I wouldn't live life is just because I would have to go through that again. What's worse than that? You put your tongue up there and, "Oh, my God, my tooth is loose. All my nightmares are coming true and I'm gonna have to rip it out, it's gonna bleed. When it comes out while I'm eating it's the worst."

**Sydnee:**

But then you get, then you get a dollar.

**Justin:**

A dollar, do you know how many dollars I would pay to avoid that waking nightmare? More than I had. I would've gotten my paper route. I would have, another paper route.

**Sydnee:**

You did. You did get one.

**Justin:**

I would've gotten a second paper route to pay for my teeth to stay in. Just, I like those teeth, they were fine.

**Sydnee:**

Well, I don't know if getting your teeth is traumatic. Luckily, uh, it happens somewhere between the ages of three and 12 months. Usually about six to

nine, so we probably don't remember it unless you're, I don't know, you've got some really crazy weird memory. Um, it takes a few years to get all of your 20 deciduous teeth in.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um, and it's normal-

**Justin:**

What a crazy design by the way. There is almost nothing else I can think of in like, in like life where your body is like, "Listen, you're young, you're gonna make some mistakes. I'm gonna give you some training teeth."

**Sydnee:**

Some starter teeth.

**Justin:**

"I'm gonna give you some starter teeth, let's see how you do this. Listen this are no lose, good, bad, these are falling out. Do whatever the hell you want with them, they're your teeth go nuts."

**Sydnee:**

You can, that's what, that's why it's so, I mean, I guess at the end of the day, it's not that bad. All those babies that get baby bottle syndrome.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Where they, they are using a bottle for too long and then their front teeth are all like too short and wonky and-

**Justin:**

Who cares? You're young make those mistakes.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, it doesn't matter. Now during teething-

**Justin:**

It should be noted by the way, Sydnee, is not a teeth doctor so if she says something crazy wrong here, you just feel free.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, I guess I should make that point right now.

**Justin:**

Yeah. All right.

**Sydnee:**

Disclaimer, I don't know anything about teeth [laughs].

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Doctors, if, okay, if a doctor tells you, unless they're like one of those sneaky doctors, that's also a dentist, like some maxillofacial surgeons 'cause they do know about, they actual, absolutely do know about teeth but, and dentists of course know about teeth. But for the most part, doctors don't know anything about teeth. We, we like, it's like an hour of one day in medical school.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

And then they're like, but basically just send 'em to a dentist. So.

**Justin:**

So-

**Sydnee:**

So don't take my word on teeth.

**Justin:**

So that being said, you should never follow what we say in this program but especially not in this episode.

**Sydnee:**

Especially not about teeth. Um, it is normal when infants are teething to be, for them to be fussy and they drool a lot and they can run a temperature, not a fever but a slightly elevated temperature. And they like to chew on a lot of things to relieve the pressure and, um, sometimes they pull on their ears because they're hurting. Uh, there is no cutting involved in cutting teeth, have you heard that term, cutting teeth?

**Justin:**

You know, I don't think I have. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, cutting. Yeah, I got it.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Um, there is no cutting involved, you don't, it doesn't actually like cut through your gums or anything like that. 'Cause otherwise like, they'd bleed, right? If, I mean, if teeth were actually breaking through-

**Justin:**

Okay. Yeah, I guess.

**Sydnee:**

... you have like some tr- trauma and bleeding.

**Justin:**

That's weird, so what's happening?

**Sydnee:**

As you grow the cells in your gums... This is pretty cool... Naturally die in certain patterns and create separations that allow the teeth to come through.

**Justin:**

Oh, that's fascinating, I had no idea.

**Sydnee:**

It's just part of, you know, growing and maturing.

**Justin:**

We are incredible machines.

**Sydnee:**

Yes we are. It's completely natural and it's normal but obviously we didn't always think so. Which is bizarre 'cause I mean, I don't think we're the only animal that this happens in.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

So the Greeks thought it was a problem. They thought that teething was responsible for all kinds of problems in, in early childhood, fevers, diarrhea, uh, convulsions or seizures, they thought were probably related to teething. Uh, they didn't really know what to do about it other than hope that your baby survived it. Um, they did advise that you could try wrapping your baby's head in a cloth and then rub its head with a lot of oil and then put some oil in its ears.

**Justin:**

And then preheat the oven to 350.

**Sydnee:**

Put some lemon, some garlic.

**Justin:**

In the baby's bottom.

**Sydnee:**

And some sage.

**Justin:**

Find a witch. In a [inaudible 00:09:39] house.

**Sydnee:**

It was reading-

**Justin:**

With the baby.

**Sydnee:**

I was reading what [inaudible 00:09:42] wrote about, um, teething and at one point it said it was, it was worsened, "Those who are particularly fat and have constipated bowels, teething can be worsened."

**Justin:**

How would, well, what, have you ever seen a baby say, "Ugh! Oh, today, this day do not get me started. My, I have not had any roughage. Well, okay. I mean, I really haven't had any roughage at all, I don't know what that word means."

**Sydnee:**

And I only drink breast milk right now.

**Justin:**

It is, it is like rush hour in there, oof.

**Sydnee:**

Um, in the 1800s teething was actually listed in London in the, in the registrar of causes of death. Teething was listed, uh, for about 12% of infants under age three in 1842.

**Justin:**

That doesn't make any sense.

**Sydnee:**

And this idea, this was debated, hotly debated throughout, you know, the history of like pediatrics until the early 1900s.

**Justin:**

What, what could there have been to debate?

**Sydnee:**

Well, a lot of it just had to do with, um, timing. It's like a coincidence, so teething seemed to cause babies a lot of distress, they were fussy and whiny and they were obviously in pain.

**Justin:**

Right. They were not, they were not happy about the situation.

**Sydnee:**

So it was thought, well, if, uh, you know, if, if this is causing the baby a lot of problems and then something else happens, this is the same time period where there were other childhood diseases that, you know, at the time we did, not only did we not have treatments or cures for but we certainly couldn't even recognize. And so then unfortunately, the baby would die of

something else and you would think, oh, maybe it was the teething, 'cause we know it was a big deal. So that was it, it was just simply a timing thing.

**Justin:**

How odd.

**Sydnee:**

So since we thought it was a problem, we came up with a lot of really weird things to do for it.

**Justin:**

It never occurred to us that it's like, it just happens and it's always happened and it's just, this is just the way things it happens, this is just the way it is?

**Sydnee:**

No, not until like the 1900s do we just say, "Well, you know what, maybe this is normal."

**Justin:**

Maybe this just happens, and has been happening to every mammal. Sorry, go ahead.

**Sydnee:**

So the initial treatments were, were not that harmful really. Um, they recognized that babies seem to like, to like chew on their fingers. The pressure on their gums helps with the pain and so they would give them things to chew on, just necklaces to chew on.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Um, they would have them, uh, sometimes just wear magic amulets.

**Justin:**

Oh, okay. That's good.

**Sydnee:**

They would have, 'em wear certain necklaces.

**Justin:**

Swap out gum pain for a choking hazard. Good job, old people.

**Sydnee:**

You would have certain necklaces that had like beans or stones or something on 'em that you could chew on, but then they would just wrap 'em around their waist for their magical powers.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um, and you know, I don't know if they're evil, teething spirits, I guess. Um, Soranus, uh, advised that you should take the brains of a hare, as in like a rabbit.

**Justin:**

Oh, good.

**Sydnee:**

And rub those on your baby's gums.

**Justin:**

Oh, excellent. That's excellent. Good, good, good. Not, do you cook 'em? Maybe just, just to get the germs out or anything. Do you think it's straight, raw brains.

**Sydnee:**

I didn't, I didn't look up the recipe.

**Justin:**

No, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Have you ever look at the recipe for hare brain? Hey.

**Justin:**

It's a hare brain scheme.

**Sydnee:**

There you go.

**Justin:**

Yeah, indeed.

**Sydnee:**

Is that where that comes from?

**Justin:**

Uh, maybe. I don't know.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know. Uh, there were also other salves, um, based on different plants and herbs or teas. Uh, one, uh, traditional remedy was rubbing a live fish on your baby's gums as sort of like a magical transference and then you would through it back into the water and it would take the baby's pain with it.

**Justin:**

Okay. Sure, why not.

**Sydnee:**

Um, but things really went awry in the 16th century when, uh, a French surgeon... I, I think we've talked about, Pare before, Ambroise Pare.

**Justin:**

Uh-huh [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Decided that the problem is that the teeth need to come through the gums but the pain and all the discomfort is a result of that not happening naturally. Like he didn't believe like it just happened, we needed to help it out and that would help your baby survive teething.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

So he advised lancing the gums to let the teeth through.

**Justin:**

Ugh, oh, it's the worst, I can't even think about that.

**Sydnee:**

I know this, this actually made me cringe-

**Justin:**

Oh.

**Sydnee:**

... uh, to read about it. It was, this was practiced until like the 19th century. This was still being written about in textbooks up to 1938, this practice. And, and I mean, it's very simple, there was and initially you need to remember, this was a time when there was, this was not done with anesthesia, certainly.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

And there wasn't even really sterile practice. So dirty instruments, no anesthesia, you're cutting a baby's gums.

**Justin:**

How's it going? How's, how is your first couple years of life?

**Sydnee:**

And it's crazy, this continued to persist despite the fact that, I mean, this was a, that was a cause of mortality.

**Justin:**

Well-

**Sydnee:**

The procedure.

**Justin:**

The procedure, certainly, yeah, I would think so.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, this led to other practices-

**Justin:**

That's brutal.

**Sydnee:**

... if you didn't just wanna lance the gums, you could blister the gums with like hot irons. Um, to try to allow the teeth through, you could bleed the gums by leaching them. Put leaches on your baby's gums???

**Justin:**

Come on, can you not?

**Sydnee:**

And there was one theory that it would help rush the teeth along if you applied cautery so like a hot iron or something, you know, to burn the back of the head.

**Justin:**

What are you doing old timey people?

**Sydnee:**

I don't know, these are babies.

**Justin:**

You're burning your baby's heads?

**Sydnee:**

This are only six to nine month old babies.

**Justin:**

What are you doing?

**Sydnee:**

Where were the parents? How are you like-

**Justin:**

Where were any of the adults? This is-

**Sydnee:**

"Hi, I'm an old timey doctor who probably doesn't know what I'm doing in any respect, could I put this leach on your baby's gums?"

**Justin:**

Where were the adults? This is like some *Lord of the Flies* nonsense. This is the kind of garbage you'd hear about like, if Neverland had a doctor, like,

this is what he... "Well, you got the tooth there and I guess we gotta make holes for the teeth." You're a child like, what are you saying? That doesn't make any sense. The teeth have been coming in for years and we're just like, "We haven't been helping them along." This is the one thing that like, God was like, "I forgot to perforate that, that's totally on me. If you guys could help me out, I know it seems to have been happening for like 1500 years since Jesus came, I should have while he was there, asked him to look into that for me, I forgot twice."

**Sydnee:**

Could Jesus do some really quick magic and perforate everybody's gums.

**Justin:**

If he just perforate everybody's gums. God, we were stupid. Sorry. Ugh.

**Sydnee:**

Now in the, in the 1700s, there was introduce the idea of just putting stuff on the gums that would make your baby quiet. So a syrup of white poppies was first introduced.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Cool.

**Sydnee:**

Um, which as you can imagine, probably worked.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

For any, anything.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Whatever, whatever the, whatever ails your baby.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

Might I suggest white poppy syrup.

**Sydnee:**

Whether it be, uh, teething or colic or fever or awake, you can, [laughs] you can-

**Justin:**

If your baby has that problem.

**Sydnee:**

If your baby has that problem you... And they had like really nice, fancy jars that you could buy and, and they all were for holding your syrup of white poppies.

**Justin:**

Maybe your baby has the problem that you would like to go see a movie tonight.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

This syrup's great for that.

**Sydnee:**

You just put this syrup of white poppies. For those who may be unaware, I'm assuming no one is but just in case you are, that of course poppies contain opium. So that's what you're really, that's what you're really getting at there. And this would lead to many, many more, uh, kind of over the counter type medications that we could, uh, purchase for teething.

**Justin:**

Oh, like what kind of stuff Syd?

**Sydnee:**

Well, unfortunately, Justin, as much as I'd like to share that with you, before I fill you in on any more teething cures, you're gonna have to head down to the billing department.

**Justin:**

Ugh, racked up another one. Okay. I will handle that real quick.

[ad break]

**Justin:**

Okay. Sydnee, teething powders, syrups, rings, hit me.

**Sydnee:**

So, uh, initially there were a lot of different teething powders and syrups that were popular throughout the US and the UK. Um, were kind of moving into like the 1800 and the early 1900 and that's when there were all kinds of crazy medicines available for everything that everybody was selling.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um, usually they contained something that wasn't good for you, maybe made you feel good but wasn't good for you. So for instance, um, a lot of them had either alcohol, opium, morphine, cocaine.

**Justin:**

Get the job done juice.

**Sydnee:**

The baby felt pretty good at the end of the day.

**Justin:**

The baby felt amazing.

**Sydnee:**

Um, unfortunately there were quite a few that contained mercury.

**Justin:**

Not good.

**Sydnee:**

There was a lot of obsession with like bowel regularity at the time.

**Justin:**

As connected to teething.

**Sydnee:**

No, but like most problems, like that's the same time babies maybe having, you know, some colic and stuff and they're teething and they're fussy, so

give them this stuff that contains mercury because it also worked as like a laxative.

**Justin:**

Perfect.

**Sydnee:**

So.

**Justin:**

My baby is regular and my baby is high.

**Sydnee:**

And your baby's getting mercury poisoning.

**Justin:**

My baby's getting mercury poison also.

**Sydnee:**

Unfortunately. Um-

**Justin:**

All, all to avoid fatal teeth coming in through their gums. These malignant, these malignant chew tumors that are emerging from my baby's beautiful gum line.

**Sydnee:**

Mortally wounded.

**Justin:**

What are these things, these white monstrosities cutting-

**Sydnee:**

That I have in my mouth right now.

**Justin:**

Yeah. I have them too. "I'm sorry. This terrible curse, it is passed down to our family as long as anybody can remember."

**Sydnee:**

"It's called teeth."

**Justin:**

"It's called teeth. I'm so sorry, they told me not to, not to have children but you're still my miracle, I am so sorry, God forgive me."

**Sydnee:**

There are a lot of different, I mean, you can look up endless numbers of, of like soothing type syrups and powders and stuff online. But just as an example, uh, there was one, I just really love this name, Atkinson and Barker's Royal Infant Preservative.

**Justin:**

Delicious.

**Sydnee:**

It sounds like you, like that's how, that's what you put on your baby when you put it in a jar and keep it on the shelf for a while.

**Justin:**

Yeah. You wanna keep that, just born look.

**Sydnee:**

Keep that baby fresh for a long time. Um, it was basically just a bunch of different oils with alcohol in it.

**Justin:**

Great.

**Sydnee:**

And it worked for everything.

**Justin:**

Sure, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, 'cause it had alcohol.

**Justin:**

Sobriety for, for starters.

**Sydnee:**

There was a really famous Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, um, which initially contained morphine, which is why it worked so well. But, uh, unfortunately because it initially was not on the bottle that it contained morphine.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

So moms were giving a lot of this to their infants and this resulted in some really unfortunate outcomes.

**Justin:**

I can imagine.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. Um, so, uh, they were forced to remove any narcotics from it, um-

**Justin:**

And then it stopped working.

**Sydnee:**

And then nobody used it.

**Justin:**

'Cause other than that it was honey.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

And ants, like all medicine back then.

**Sydnee:**

It didn't make your baby sleepy anymore.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

And jonesin' in for morphine. Um, there was also, uh, Steedman Soothing Powders, which contained both mercury and opium.

**Justin:**

Oh, great.

**Sydnee:**

So, don't worry, double hit. We'll poison your baby with mercury, uh, give him the runs and knock him out with opium. But it had plenty of sugar to hide the taste of the mercury, so don't worry.

**Justin:**

That's the perfect thing for teeth too, which is get-

**Sydnee:**

Lots of sugar.

**Justin:**

... get those sugar right in there.

**Sydnee:**

That was actually really popular in a lot of these syrups and powders, was to put enough sugar in there so that you couldn't taste the mercury.

**Justin:**

God. Sometimes I wish when I'm feeling dumb, I wish I could go back to old timey times and walk around just feeling like the smartest dude on earth. I bet, I could just find five things on my walk from like my house to the bank where it's just like 20 things and that's stupid, you are killing your baby. You are an idiot. Your leg's gonna fall off.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, the great thing is like, though, even if you had told people they wouldn't have believed you.

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

Because they were always... And I should make that point.

**Justin:**

I would get one thing right before they assume I'm a witch. Guaranteed.

**Sydnee:**

No. Well there it is, all throughout this history of, I mean this, uh, teething or anything else, anything we ever talk about, there are always like a handful of smart people who were going, "You know-

**Justin:**

I don't know. I don't know.

**Sydnee:**

... I don't think this is right." And who are writing papers, like even some doctors who were going, "I just really think maybe just let your baby teethe, just deal with it." Um, but nobody ever listens to 'em. So teething rings were also pop, have also been popular for a very long time. Um-

**Justin:**

So that's a thing though, right?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. They're still a thing. Uh, back in the 17th to 19th century in England, they were called, uh, corals.

**Justin:**

Why?

**Sydnee:**

Well, because they were usually made of coral.

**Justin:**

Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:**

But they could be made of bone or ivory.

**Justin:**

It seems kind of rough.

**Sydnee:**

It is.

**Justin:**

It seems like they can be unpleasant.

**Sydnee:**

That's very hard. And it was, um, it was kind of a ring, if you see like one of those old silver rattles with a ring at the bottom.

**Justin:**

Sure. Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

That ring was for teething.

**Justin:**

Huh.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and the thing about it, it, it was supposed to use mechanically, like it was supposed to work mechanically, like the, your baby chew on it and that makes its gums feel better. And it may, it was cold and hard and that helps with the teething process. Um, but it was also made of some kind of animal bone or ivory or something like that. And so it had this magical element that you could get the strength of the animal from it.

**Justin:**

Awesome.

**Sydnee:**

So you could survive teething.

**Justin:**

That's what I want. I want my wolf baby.

**Sydnee:**

You could also use a wolf's tooth. That was a very popular.

**Justin:**

That would be sweet.

**Sydnee:**

I mean, I guess you have to get a wolf's tooth.

**Justin:**

Yeah. Yeah. Well the kid has to get the wolf's tooth. Paul, uh-

**Sydnee:**

Your six month old has to get a wolf's tooth?

**Justin:**

Like David Crockett, he's gotta kill him a bear when he was only three.

**Sydnee:**

You, you've mastered holding your head up and you can now sit up right?

**Justin:**

[laughs] Here's a knife, kill a bear.

**Sydnee:**

Kill, kill a wolf, get its tooth and you'll survive teething. It's a wonder anybody made it out of this time period.

**Justin:**

I want you to kill 20 wolfs then put their teeth in your mouth and give yourself fake wolf teeth. That no son of mine doesn't have fake wolf teeth.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, one product that was kind of, I think, unique to itself. I didn't find a lot of, uh, common products in this theme, was in 1903, there was Butler's electro medical teething necklace.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Which was basically just some sort of electric necklace that your baby wears. They don't chew on it or anything, they just... I mean, they probably are gonna chew on it.

**Justin:**

Right. 'Cause they're babies, they'll chew on anything.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and they're teething, uh, and that helps. But you just wear it and it would make your teeth grow in easier.

**Justin:**

I mean, it wouldn't.

**Sydnee:**

No, it wouldn't, it wouldn't work at all.

**Justin:**

No. It doesn't do that at all but it's something you could buy and give somebody your money for.

**Sydnee:**

It was just guaranteed to like, make your baby like better. Like not just in terms of like teething or not ill, just like, you know, just better than other babies.

**Justin:**

And that's sort of like, uh, in inconclusive, uh, ephemeral way that people aspire to be better in like olden times, just like more vigor or vim.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly.

**Justin:**

Whatever that is.

**Sydnee:**

Your baby's gonna look like one of those old fashioned, uh, like posters with like the guy with the mustache and all the muscles and lifting, lifting the giant dumbbell.

**Justin:**

Get your, get up and go.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly.

**Justin:**

This electric necklace.

**Sydnee:**

Don't get sand kicked in your face anymore, put your baby in this electric necklace. Well, that seems like a whole safety issue though.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

So I wouldn't have used that.

**Justin:**

No. Do you think electric necklace for a baby, what could go wrong? Everything.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, there is a homeopathic remedy of course for teething. Uh, this one is actually, I believe still on the shelves. I don't think, um, I've ever seen it, I think it's maybe more popular in the UK. But there's, uh, Nelson's and I, I should say this, I don't mean that people in the UK use this. I know there, there are probably like a ton of listeners who are going, "No!" Right now.

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

I'm just saying, I've never seen this on the shelves here, I think you're more likely to find it on the shelves there. Um, Nelson's Teetha and Boots alternatives teething pain relief. They're both made by the same company secret, I figured that out.

**Justin:**

Really?

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

Interesting.

**Sydnee:**

They're still in the market as far as I know and they contain some dilution, you know. 'Cause that's, remember that's how homeopathy works.

**Justin:**

The more the, greater the delusion the... Sorry. Did I say delusion? What I meant to say was dilution. The greater the dilution-

**Sydnee:**

But delusion works just as well-

**Justin:**

Okay, well, it's debatable.

**Sydnee:**

... to be fair.

**Justin:**

The greater the dilution, the stronger the medicine.

**Sydnee:**

So, so these are, I think some kind of, uh, granules and they contain some very, very small amount of chamomile.

**Justin:**

That's so you don't wanna screw around with chamomile I'm just saying. A little bit, put a little bit of, too much of this in your baby's engine that, uh, the little bugger's gonna be revving for days. You don't wanna play around with chamomile.

**Sydnee:**

It's just so soothing and relaxing.

**Justin:**

It is soozing.

**Sydnee:**

If you give your baby too much of this, he is just gonna be like sunglasses on, Hawaiian shirt. Jimmy Buffet on the radio.

**Justin:**

Olds Spuds Mackenzie, just living his days out on the couch.

**Sydnee:**

Like everything's chill, everything's cool.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

He's gotta take things more seriously than that.

**Justin:**

Yeah. You got your baby's gotta get serious.

**Sydnee:**

Um, now to be fair, this is probably not a dangerous treatment.

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

It's probably not nearly dangerous to the-

**Justin:**

Dangerous to your wallet.

**Sydnee:**

Electro medical teething necklace.

**Justin:**

Right. So Syd, what, what about now? I mean, we do, we mentioned the rings, Is there anything else?

**Sydnee:**

Um, well the most important thing to know about teething is that okay, well, one it's normal.

**Justin:**

Sure. Been doing it for a while.

**Sydnee:**

We finally, we finally figured out, I mean, it really took us to the early to mid-1900s before doctors finally agreed and made the statement, teething is

normal, it is not a leading cause of death among infants or ever a cause of death. Now some of our treatments were-

**Justin:**

Cool.

**Sydnee:**

... for sure.

**Justin:**

Good job.

**Sydnee:**

But teething itself is fine. Your baby will most likely ride it out with no need of assistance from anybody or anything. Um, but there are some things that can help out, 'cause, I mean your, your little, your little guy or girl is hurting. So rings are helpful, you can use teething rings. Um, make sure there's something that they can't chew, chew up, up, you know, chew apart and swallow, that's the main thing. But most teething rings are like that, your, your baby, we would not be able to chew through them, um, unless they already have teeth in which case, I mean, what are you doing?

**Justin:**

What are you doing?

**Sydnee:**

What are you even doing? You, you clearly, you need to go back to the beginning of this episode where I tell you what teething is. Um, there are medications out there, a lot of like topical stuff you can put on your gums to try to numb the pain. For the most part, you just wanna avoid a lot of them.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Occasional Tylenol is okay or some ibuprofen.

**Justin:**

How do you know when your baby's not just faking it when they really need it?

**Sydnee:**

Like faking teething?

**Justin:**

Faking the pain. Like how do you know they need [crosstalk 00:32:15]-

**Sydnee:**

I mean, you can look, you can look and feel and see if there are teeth coming in.

**Justin:**

All right.

**Sydnee:**

But pretty much if your baby's fussy, um, doesn't wanna eat as much, pulling at their ears, they're probably are teething.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm [affirmative].

**Sydnee:**

Um, again, I wouldn't, I wouldn't use a lot of topical stuff, don't use aspirin. Uh, there, you know, you can read a lot of suggestions from all the mom sites online but like chilled foods are good or frozen things. Cold things tend to help anything with pressure on the gums, cold rags. Um, if you look around the world, there's some interesting ideas that are in use, in Japan, they like wooden rings it's very popular. Um, uh, Zwieback toast, I believe is very popular in Germany. It's just a hard toast, you can get that here. Um, and then in, there's a traditional African medicine method of tying a raw egg over the bed, just like suspended in a little pouch above your baby, I don't-

**Justin:**

Well, that doesn't seem like a treatment perse.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know if that works.

**Justin:**

It seems like it will be [inaudible 00:33:14] That should been a little earlier in the episode, maybe.

**Sydnee:**

It still, it's still in use.

**Justin:**

I mean, there's lots of things in use, Sydster.

**Sydnee:**

Um, I, I used a bagel when I was little.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. My mom just tied a, a bagel to a rope and I had that.

**Justin:**

Rope bagel.

**Sydnee:**

A rope bagel.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

I had a rope bagel. Um, it's important not to confuse actual illness with teething, which is why I say teething does not cause a fever. If your baby really has a fever, you know, talk to your doctor, get it checked out. Um, and there are some traditional medicines in use in the middle east in India that do contain lead. So if you're in contact with any of those kind of traditional medicines, I would wanna know if they contain lead and if they do, don't use them. Um, and also, so you probably don't wanna use whiskey, which is a popular treatment in this part of the world.

**Justin:**

All right.

**Sydnee:**

You know, just give your baby a little whiskey.

**Justin:**

Or don't, probably don't.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, don't. Don't, don't do that. Remember we're, we're throwing back now to Miss Winslow and her soothing syrup.

**Justin:**

Right.

**Sydnee:**

Not a good plan.

**Justin:**

Uh, I want... Thank you all so much for listening to this episode of *Sawbones*. We hope you enjoyed our first, uh, live show last week. Thank you to everybody who, uh, came out to that, that was like really, really, really cool, uh, to see everybody, the first time we'd ever done a live show. Sydnee, you had fun, right, you enjoyed yourself?

**Sydnee:**

Oh, I had a ton of fun. Thank you everybody for making it so easy and painless. Um, especially to some of the people who brought us presents like, uh, Prohibition Bakery.

**Justin:**

Oh, gosh, those were good.

**Sydnee:**

Gave us some delicious cupcakes.

**Justin:**

They were so considerate, they, they're, they were boozy cupcakes but they, uh, made some non-boozy ones for the, for the Sydster.

**Sydnee:**

Just for me and I ate them all, they were delicious.

**Justin:**

Um, the, uh, I wanna thank people who are tweeting about the show, like, uh, Steven, uh, crazy cat lady. Uh, Jen Hints, Tina Wall, uh, Ellie Jacqueline. Uh, not that Rachel Ross, Tyler Mathson. Christine, Adachi, Susie R. Sporxan, uh, Max Burn, Amelia, Elizabeth Rival, Eric Jordan, Anthony Riggs, so many others, uh, you're all the best.

**Sydnee:**

So, other than Leslie and Adam at Prohibition Bakery who gave us those delicious cupcakes, we also got a, an adorable onesie and some really cool art.

**Justin:**

From, uh, from, Justin Greg. So thank you for that, Justin.

**Sydnee:**

And thank you so much to, Callie too, who is a beautiful illustrator who gave me some postcards with her gorgeous artwork on it and enjoyed our show as well.

**Justin:**

So thanks to everybody for, for coming out to the show and giving us stuff and saying, hi, uh, it is, it was so neat to meet everybody and thanks to People's Improv Theater for having us and, uh, you're all the best, I guess.

**Sydnee:**

You, no, you are you don't have to guess.

**Justin:**

You are the best. Uh, we're on the Maximum Fun network, there's a ton of great podcasts you can listen to there, uh, like *Jordan, Jesse, Go! Stop podcasting yourself. Lady to Lady, One Bad Mother, The Goosedown.*

**Sydnee:**

*My Brother, My Brother and Me.*

**Justin:**

So many others. So make sure you head to the [maximumfun.org](http://maximumfun.org) and download all of those. That's gonna do it for us. Uh, we are here every Tuesday with new episodes, pretty much every Tuesday, I guess.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah.

**Justin:**

We're gonna be here next Tuesday with another episode, until then I am Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:**

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

**Justin:**

And as always don't drill a hole in your head.

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