Pregnancy and Oral Health

ADA American Dental Association®

America's leading advocate for oral health

Choose Healthy Foods

Eat foods that are healthy for you and your baby. What you eat during your pregnancy affects the growth of the fetus, including the teeth.

A baby's teeth begin to form early in a pregnancy. For teeth to be healthy, they need enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients — especially vitamins A, C and D, protein, calcium and phosphorous.

The calcium your baby needs is provided by your diet, not your teeth. But if you don't get enough calcium in your diet, your body will take calcium from your bones. So be sure to get enough calcium in your diet. You can do this by having at least three servings of dairy products per day. Your OB-GYN may recommend calcium supplements or other vitamins. For more ideas about how to eat healthy, see *www.choosemyplate.gov.*

How Pregnancy May Affect Your Gums

The old saying that mothers lose a tooth with each pregnancy is false. However, it is true that many women have **gingivitis** (jin-ja-VIE-tis) during pregnancy. Gingivitis happens when the plaque on teeth makes your gums red, tender, and likely to bleed easily when you brush. If gingivitis is not treated, it may lead to more serious gum diseases.

The hormonal changes during pregnancy can make your gums more sensitive to plaque and more prone to bleeding. Your dentist may recommend more frequent professional cleanings to help you avoid problems.

TALK TO YOUR DENTIST

In some women, growths of tissue called "pregnancy tumors" appear on the gums, most often during the second trimester. These growths or swellings are usually found between the teeth. Excess plaque can inflame the gums and cause them to swell. They bleed easily and appear red and shiny.

These growths may go away after your baby is born. If necessary, your dentist can remove them. If you notice any swelling or other changes in your gums, see your dentist.

Prevent Tooth Decay

Your teeth are covered by a sticky film of bacteria called plaque (sounds like PLAK). After a meal or snack, the bacteria in plaque use sugars in foods and drinks and turn them into acid.

When you have sugary foods or drinks many times a day, the acid attacks your tooth enamel again and again. This can cause tooth decay and a cavity can form.

To help prevent tooth decay:

· **Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste that has the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance.** The Seal means the product has met the ADA's standards for safety and effectiveness.

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· Floss once a day or use another between-the-teeth cleaner.

· If you need help controlling plaque, your dentist may recommend a bacteria-fighting mouthrinse.

· If you have morning sickness and are vomiting often, stomach acids come into contact with your teeth. Over time these acids can cause tooth enamel to wear away. Tell your dentist about this situation. To lessen the effect of this acid, you can rinse your mouth with a teaspoon of baking soda mixed with water. And do not brush your teeth right after vomiting. Wait until the acids are rinsed away, about 30 minutes.

Medicines

Your dentist may talk with your physician to determine which medicines — such as painkillers or antibiotics — you may take safely during the pregnancy. Discuss any concerns you have with your dentist and physician.

Dental X-Rays

Current guidelines say it is more risky for a pregnant woman to postpone needed dental treatment than to have dental treatment including an x-ray exam. This is because dental disease not treated during pregnancy can lead to more serious health problems such as infection, pain and inability to eat. Radiation from dental x-rays is very low. If an x-ray exam is needed, the dentist will take steps to reduce your radiation exposure.

Take Time to Take Care of Your Mouth

If you are pregnant or thinking about becoming pregnant, now is the time to pay close attention to your teeth and gums. That's because your body and mouth changes during pregnancy can make some dental problems worse.

By following a few smart steps, you will be less likely to have dental problems. Taking good care of your mouth benefits your overall health during this important time.

Visit the Dentist

If you are planning to get pregnant, have your teeth cleaned at your dentist's office and schedule any needed treatment. This can help lower your risk of having a dental emergency during your pregnancy. If you are already pregnant or think that you might be, let your dental office know.

Tell your dentist if there is any change in your health, any change in the medicines you take or any special advice from your physician. This will help your dentist plan your treatment.

Continue regular dental visits during your pregnancy. It is generally safe to have dental treatment during this time. However, tell your dentist if you have been told about any risks linked with your pregnancy, or if you have some other medical condition. Your dentist can consult with your physician about any treatment that is recommended.

SEE YOUR DENTIST REGULARLY

Looking Ahead

After your baby is born, keep taking good care of your teeth and gums.

Bring your baby to the dentist no later than his or her first birthday. Plan this "well-baby visit" to give your baby's smile a healthy start.

When you visit your dentist, tell him or her:

- if you have a high-risk pregnancy
- the month of pregnancy you are in
- if you are taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicines
- about any changes in your oral health — any swelling, redness, pain, bleeding, or sores in your mouth
- if you have noticed any loose teeth

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

· Brush your teeth twice a day with
  a fluoride toothpaste.
· Clean between your teeth once a day.
· Eat a healthy diet and limit snacks.
· Visit your dentist regularly.

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about taking care of
your mouth and teeth,
visit MouthHealthy.org,
the ADA's website just for patients.

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