

Oral Health During Pregnancy



If you're pregnant, your oral health is as important to your baby as your overall health. During pregnancy, hormonal changes may make your gums more susceptible to bacteria, and remember — you're really brushing for two.

Dental disease can have serious effects on you and your baby during and after pregnancy — from the possibility of low birth weight to passing on the bacteria that cause tooth decay. Here are some fundamentals to remember during pregnancy to protect your oral health and give your baby the best chance at a healthy smile:

It's common for pregnant women to develop “pregnancy gingivitis,” an inflammation of the gums and surrounding tissues. Symptoms include gums that become swollen and bleed easily when brushed. Some studies have shown that women with gum disease may be up to 7.5 times more likely to have a pregnancy complication. So pay extra attention to getting rid of plaque while pregnant by taking extra care and time to brush and floss.

- Schedule a complete dental check-up before you become pregnant or early in your pregnancy. Your dentist may want you to get more frequent cleanings during your pregnancy, especially during your second trimester and early in the third trimester. Experts suggest pregnant women defer elective dental care during the first eight weeks of pregnancy and during late pregnancy.
- X-rays should be avoided, but they are acceptable if they are necessary. Any procedure — including X-rays — that can wait until after the baby is born, should. But if you have a dental emergency in the third trimester, consult your obstetrician and call your dentist.
- When you are pregnant, what you eat is important. Eating right will help you and your growing baby stay healthy. Follow your doctor's advice for eating the right foods and taking vitamins.