

# Oral Health and Pregnancy

A healthy mouth is essential for a healthy pregnancy. Diet and hormonal changes that occur during pregnancy may increase a woman's risk for tooth decay and gum disease. Infections from tooth decay and gum disease can affect the health of a mother and her baby.

## How does my pregnancy affect my oral health?

Vomiting caused by morning sickness can allow stomach acid to weaken your tooth enamel. This can increase your risk for cavities. Morning sickness can also make it difficult to brush and floss which also increases your risk for cavities and gum disease.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can lead to an increased risk for gingivitis, an infection in your gums caused by plaque (germs). Hormonal changes can also cause your mouth to be drier. Less saliva or spit can increase your risk for cavities.

Eating more frequently during pregnancy can increase your risk for cavities, especially if you choose sugary or starchy foods.

## How does my oral health affect my pregnancy?

If you have gum disease during pregnancy, the germs in your mouth can spread to your entire body. These germs can cause you to deliver a premature, low birth weight baby. They can also increase your risk for diabetes or preeclampsia (high blood pressure) during pregnancy.

## How does my oral health affect my baby?

After your baby is born, germs that cause tooth decay can easily pass from your mouth to your baby's mouth. These germs can be passed through kissing, sharing utensils, or putting your baby's pacifier or hands in your mouth.

## What should I do to keep my mouth healthy?

Visit a dentist at least one time during your pregnancy.

- Dental work is safe at any time during your pregnancy, but it may be more comfortable during your second trimester.
- A dentist can tell if you have any problems in your mouth and give you advice on how to keep you mouth healthy.

Choose healthy snacks.

- Limit sugary and starchy foods to mealtime only.
- Choose fruit rather than fruit juice.
- Avoid soda pop, including diet soda.
- Use gum and mints that contain xylitol.
- Drink fluoridated water throughout the day, especially between meals and snacks.

Take care of your mouth.

- Brush your teeth, especially along the gumline, at least two times per day.
- Use a small, soft toothbrush.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride.
- Floss at least once daily to clean between teeth and under your gums.

For frequent nausea or vomiting.

- Eat small amounts of healthy foods throughout the day such as fruits, vegetables, yogurt, or cheese.
- Use a fluoridated, alcohol-free mouthrinse daily.
- Rinse your mouth with water or a combination of baking soda and water after vomiting to stop the acid attack on your teeth.

Good oral hygiene during pregnancy can have a positive impact on your health and the health of your baby!