



## *Tooth and Gum Care During Pregnancy*

When you are pregnant, it is important that you pay close attention to your teeth and gums. Hormones associated with pregnancy can make some dental problems worse.

Pregnant women often develop a common gum disease called gingivitis. Gingivitis is caused by plaque (the colorless, sticky film of bacteria) that remains on the teeth. The plaque irritates the gums, making them red, swollen and likely to bleed easily when you brush your teeth. This is called “pregnancy gingivitis.” Hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause the gums to respond to the plaque by becoming red and swollen. It’s the plaque and not the hormones causing the irritation. You can prevent these problems by making sure you brush each day, paying special attention to cleaning along your gum line.

Oral health is an important part of maintaining good overall health. Moreover, recent research has shown that the oral health of the mother can affect the health of her baby.

New research suggests that pregnant women who have gum disease are more likely to have babies born before their due dates and are more likely to have low-birth weight babies. The germ that causes gum infection can travel through your bloodstream to places far from the mouth, even into the uterus (womb). Chemicals produced by the germs might cause early labor and possibly premature delivery.

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## Tips for Good Oral Health During Pregnancy

- Brush at least twice a day with a soft-bristled toothbrush, and use fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily to clean between the teeth where the toothbrush can't reach.
- Eat a healthy and well-balanced diet rich in calcium, vitamin C and vitamin D. Limit the number of times you eat sweet or starchy snacks or drink sugary drinks each day. Sweet or starchy snacks can cause acid attacks on your teeth, making them more prone to cavities. Your baby's first teeth will start to develop about three months into your pregnancy. The healthier your diet is, the greater the likelihood that your baby's teeth and gums will be healthy, too.

- Dental care during pregnancy is important. For your health and the protection of your baby, have at least one dental checkup during your pregnancy. Be sure to tell your dentist you are pregnant, the month of pregnancy you are in, and if it is a high-risk pregnancy. Also tell the dentist what medications you are on and if you have had any change in your teeth and gums.
- Don't smoke. Avoid places where people are smoking.



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