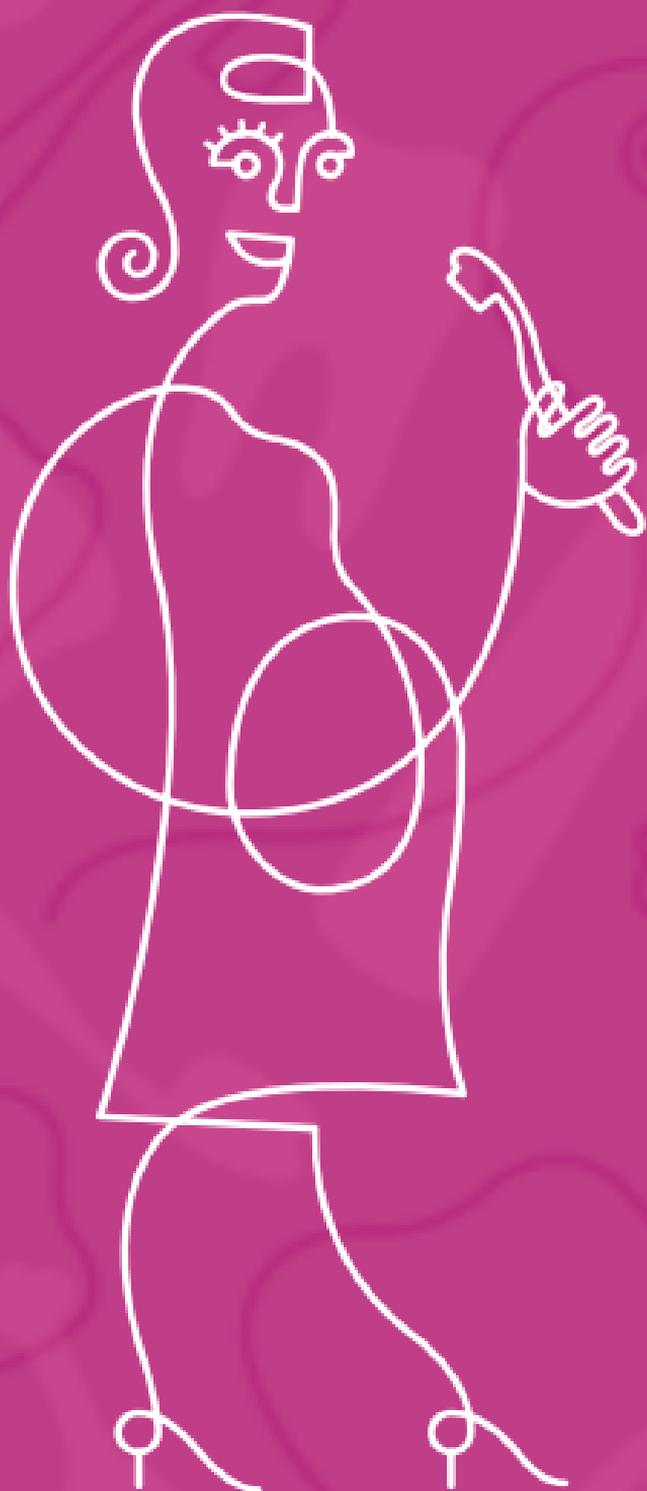


Pregnancy and oral hygiene

Ensuring healthy teeth and gums—
for you and your baby



When you're pregnant, you know how important it is to take special care of your body. However, you should also know that pregnancy is a time to take extra special care of your teeth and gums. That's because hormonal changes in your body during pregnancy can increase your chances of developing gum disease.

So while you are pregnant, make sure you practice good oral hygiene, which means brushing and flossing every day. By combining this routine with a healthy, balanced diet and regular dental visits, you will not only help avoid dental problems of your own, you will also contribute to the healthy development of your baby.



How does pregnancy affect my teeth and gums?

Pregnancy causes hormonal fluctuations that increase your risk for gum disease. The changing hormone levels in your body can make your gums more sensitive to harmful *plaque*—the colorless, sticky film of bacteria that constantly forms on teeth. Furthermore, if you already have signs of gum disease, being pregnant may make it worse. This is why it's vital to pay more careful attention to your daily brushing and flossing routine to keep plaque under control.

How does gum disease develop?

Plaque is one of the main causes of gum disease. If plaque is not removed by daily brushing and flossing, it will accumulate on the teeth and below the gumline, which can lead to *gingivitis*—the first stage of gum disease. If ignored, gingivitis can progress to a more serious form of gum disease called *periodontitis*, in which the gums and bones that support your teeth and keep them in place are permanently damaged.

How do I know if I have gum disease?

As many as 70% of women have some form of gum disease during pregnancy, so watch out for these warning signs:

- Your gums are tender, swollen, or red
- Your gums bleed when you brush or floss
- You can't get rid of bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth

If you think you might have gum disease, visit your dentist or hygienist right away for a professional cleaning and exam: if caught early enough, gum disease can usually be reversed or controlled.

Am I also at a greater risk for tooth decay?

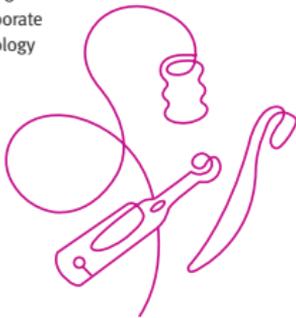
Yes. Sugary food cravings and morning sickness may make you more vulnerable to developing cavities.

How can I avoid tooth decay and gum disease?

Simple: get into the habit of cleaning your teeth properly every day and visiting your dentist regularly.

Brush thoroughly at least twice a day, preferably in the morning and before bed.

Use a soft-bristled toothbrush or a good quality power toothbrush—look for modern designs that are safe and gentle to use. Many incorporate advanced technology that allows them to remove plaque more effectively than ordinary manual toothbrushes.



Take your time. You should spend at least two minutes brushing to remove the plaque that is constantly forming on your teeth.



Use toothpaste that contains fluoride. Fluoride is proven to help prevent cavities.

Clean between teeth daily. Use floss or other interdental cleaners to remove plaque from areas that your toothbrush can't reach. Did you know, if you don't floss, you're leaving up to 40% of your tooth surfaces untouched and uncleaned?

Should I tell my dentist that I'm pregnant?

As soon as you believe that you are pregnant, tell your dentist because it may not be safe to have x-rays during pregnancy. You should also let your dentist know if you are trying to get pregnant: knowing this can help in planning x-rays or other treatments.

Tell your dentist what medicines you are taking and if your physician has given you any specific medical advice, as it may affect the treatment given.



What should I know about my diet?

Your body is the sole source of nourishment for your unborn child. Check with your physician as he or she is the best source for detailed information on what to eat while you are pregnant. In general, however, you should try to eat more foods that are rich in calcium—these are especially good for developing teeth and bones.



When do my baby's teeth start developing?

Your baby's first teeth will begin to develop about three months into your pregnancy. And the healthier your diet is, the greater the likelihood that your baby's teeth and gums will be healthy, too.

How should I care for my infant's teeth and gums?

Even before your baby's teeth appear, it's a good idea to start caring for them.

After feeding your baby, use a damp washcloth or piece of gauze to wipe the gums—this will remove any plaque that has formed. Ask your dentist, hygienist, or pediatrician to show you the best way to do this.

Once teeth appear, brush after feeding with a soft-bristled toothbrush.

What is "baby bottle tooth decay?"

If a baby is put to bed with a bottle containing milk (even breast milk), formula, or juice, the sugar in the drink and the bacteria in your baby's mouth can interact to form an acid that attacks the enamel in your baby's teeth and may cause tooth decay. Fortunately, this is easy to prevent; if your baby needs a bedtime bottle, fill it with water instead.



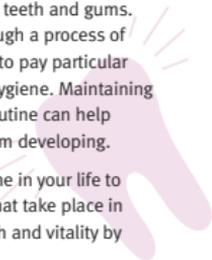
When should I first take my baby to the dentist?

Try to schedule your child's first dental visit sometime between the eruption of the first tooth and one year of age. At this time, the dentist will check your child's teeth, gums, and jaw for any problems and show you the right way to clean and care for your child's teeth.

A time to be healthy and happy!

As a mother-to-be, what you do to take care of your health (including your diet) affects the development of your baby's teeth and gums. And as your body goes through a process of change, it is also important to pay particular attention to your own oral hygiene. Maintaining a good daily oral hygiene routine can help keep potential problems from developing.

Don't forget that this is a time in your life to enjoy the natural changes that take place in your body—so radiate health and vitality by keeping your smile bright!



Pregnancy and oral hygiene— a quick guide:



Brush thoroughly at least twice a day with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste.



Floss daily to remove plaque from between your teeth and under the gumline.



Eat a well balanced diet, rich in calcium; this will help you and your unborn baby get all the nutrients you both need and help keep your teeth and gums healthy.



Keep your dental office informed about your pregnancy and any changes in medication.



Continue to visit your dentist or hygienist for regular checkups.

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