

Baby Your Teeth

Did you know pregnancy affects your oral health? It's true! Hormone changes during pregnancy increase the risk of developing gingivitis (infection of the gums) and periodontitis (gum disease). When you have gum disease, your gums become inflamed and pull away from your teeth. The space left behind can become infected. If gum disease isn't treated, the affected teeth may have to be removed.

In addition to hurting *you*, gum disease can also harm your unborn *baby*. Studies have shown gum disease may be associated with preterm delivery and low birth weight babies. For these reasons, it is especially important to practice good oral health when you are pregnant.

3 things to tell your dentist

1. **Tell your dentist you are pregnant.** You can—and should!—get routine dental care during pregnancy. If possible, extensive or elective dental work and X-rays should be postponed until after your baby is born. Discuss your treatment plan with your dentist and health care provider.
2. **Tell your dentist about any medications and medical treatments you are on.** This includes prenatal vitamins and any specific medical advice your health care provider has given you.
3. **Tell your dentist about changes in your gums.** If your gums are tender or if they start to bleed or swell, tell your dentist right away. This could be a sign of pregnancy gingivitis.

3 things to do

1. **Take care of your mouth.** Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss at least once a day.
2. **Get routine dental care.** Regular dental exams are even more important when you are pregnant due to the risk of gingivitis and gum disease and the associated risk of preterm delivery and low birth weight.



3. **Eat a well-balanced diet.** What you eat affects your baby's developing teeth. Eat a diet high in **calcium** (milk, dark leafy green vegetables), **vitamin D** (milk or cheese), **vitamin C** (citrus fruits, broccoli), and **vitamin A** and **beta carotene** (carrots, green and yellow vegetables). All of these are important for developing bones and teeth.

3 ways to cope with morning sickness

1. **Change the way you brush.** If you have morning sickness, brushing your teeth may trigger your gag reflex. Tell your dentist about this. He/she might recommend using a smaller toothbrush and/or using a bland-tasting toothpaste.
2. **Rinse your mouth.** If you vomit, rinse your mouth out afterward. When you vomit, you bring up acid that can coat your teeth and dissolve tooth enamel. Rinsing helps wash away this acid. If you feel like you need to brush, try to wait at least 30 minutes so your teeth can "recover" from the acid "attack."
3. **Snack the right way.** You might find that eating small amounts of food throughout the day helps reduce nausea. Just make sure you aren't snacking on sugary sweets all day. These increase the risk of tooth decay and erosion. And, no matter what snacks you choose, rinse your mouth after eating them.

You have a lot to do and think about while you're pregnant. But make sure you fit in time for oral health care. It will help keep your teeth healthy, and your good oral health can help make sure your baby and your baby's teeth are healthy, too.

This article was originally printed in the Summer 2016 issue of **PrimeLines**, PrimeWest Health's member magazine.

Sources: South Australia Women's and Children's Health Network, WebMD

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