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Dental Health During Pregnancy

Congratulations! You have a lot to think about during this time. Good oral health is extremely important during pregnancy and routine dental care can be provided safely. The following are strategies to help improve your dental health during pregnancy. Take time for yourself and your baby to embrace healthy behaviors so your health can be maintained or improved during this special time.

Nutrition

- Nutrition is very important during pregnancy. Your baby receives nutrients from your body. By eating right, you can start caring for your baby's teeth as soon as you find out you are pregnant. Be sure to include foods with calcium and vitamin D in your diet. Your doctor can provide information to help you eat well during pregnancy.

Hormone Changes

- Hormone changes can make your gums hurt, swell, or bleed. Brushing and flossing your teeth daily will help keep them healthy. If you did not have your teeth examined and cleaned before you found out you were pregnant, you should do so during your pregnancy.

Gum Swelling

- Some women develop a “**pregnancy tumor**” on their gums. This is a painless bump on the gums that can be pink, red, or purple. It usually does not cause problems but visit your dentist if you notice bumps or swellings.

Snacking

- Dental problems can be caused by snacking, so try and resist the urge to snack. When you do snack, choose foods that are nutritious for you and your baby, such as raw fruits and vegetables, yogurt, or cheese. Sweet snacks may cause tooth decay or cavities. Eat sweets with a meal instead of between meals. If you are unable to brush your teeth and gums after snacking, rinse your mouth with tap water or chew sugar-free gum.

Dental Visits

- It is safe and important to see your dentist and dental hygienist during your pregnancy. Be sure to schedule an appointment so you don't have to make an urgent dental visit. If you are in active treatment, be sure to make an appointment before your baby is born. After birth it may take several months for you to find time for an appointment.
- Poor oral health in the mother is associated with preterm birth and low birth weight babies. In addition, dental caries (tooth decay or cavities) in the mother can be passed to the baby and

increase the child's risk of caries.

Are X-rays, Nitrous Oxide (laughing gas) and Medications Safe?

- If you need emergency dental care during your pregnancy, you may have X-rays taken of your teeth. Make sure to remind your dental care professional of your pregnancy.
- Limit or avoid nitrous oxide (laughing gas), some prescribed antibiotics, and pain medications.
 - ✓ Your dentist can contact your prenatal doctor with any questions.

Other Changes during Pregnancy

- Eating and oral hygiene routines may change during pregnancy. Take some self-care time to brush your teeth and to clean your tongue at least twice per day. Set aside time to floss your teeth at least once per day.

Special considerations to prevent tooth decay in pregnant women experiencing frequent nausea and vomiting

- Eat small amounts of nutritious foods throughout the day.
- Use a teaspoon of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) in a cup of tap water as a rinse after vomiting to neutralize the acid.
- Do not brush for one hour after vomiting as stomach acid can weaken the enamel and cause hypersensitivity.
- Chew sugarless or xylitol-containing gum after eating, which prevents transmission of bacteria to the baby and reduces the child's risk of tooth decay.
- Use gentle brushing with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste to prevent damage to demineralized tooth surfaces.

Resources

NOTE: This fact sheet was derived from one previously published by the Arizona Department of Health Services.

American Dental Association – Mouth Healthy
<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/pregnancy>

American College of Nurses
https://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000003904/Dental_Care_Pregnancy.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/publications/features/pregnancy-and-oral-health.html>