

Pregnancy and dental health

Why is dental health during pregnancy important?

It is important to take care of your teeth and gums during pregnancy for the following reasons:

- Hormonal changes during pregnancy can affect your gums, causing them to bleed, become more sensitive, swollen and red. This is called “pregnancy gingivitis” or gum disease
- Gingivitis can lead to more serious periodontal (gum and bone) disease. This can increase the risk for other health conditions (e.g., diabetes and heart disease)
- Poor dental health may affect the general oral health of your developing baby. Research shows there may be a link between periodontal disease and having a pre-term or low-birth weight baby. These babies are at greater risk of having developmental problems, asthma, ear infections and may have a higher risk of infant death

How can I keep my teeth and gums healthy?

Your teeth can be affected by what you eat and drink, how often you eat and drink, how long the food stays on your teeth and how long plaque builds up on your teeth. Plaque is a sticky film that contains bacteria (germs).

To keep your teeth and gums healthy:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with toothpaste that contains fluoride
- Clean carefully along the gumline where plaque sticks
- Floss your teeth daily

- Choose to drink water between meals and snacks. Avoid frequent sipping on sweet liquids and/or acidic drinks
- Eat healthy foods and limit foods that are sweet or stick to your teeth. If you eat sweets occasionally, try to eat them at mealtime
- Brush your teeth after meals and snacks. If this is not possible, rinse your mouth with water or a fluoride mouth rinse
- Do not smoke/vape, drink alcohol or use cannabis during pregnancy
- Continue to have regular professional dental care

Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy can leave stomach acids in your mouth that can damage the teeth. After vomiting, rinse your mouth with water or a mixture of one teaspoon of baking soda with water. Do not brush your teeth for 30 minutes. You can use fluoride mouth rinse to freshen your mouth and protect your teeth.

Is it safe to seek professional dental care while I am pregnant?

Caring for your teeth and gums during pregnancy is an important part of having a healthy pregnancy.

Regular dental cleanings and check-ups are safe at any time during pregnancy. Be sure to tell your dentist or dental hygienist that you are pregnant. Any pain, swelling or infection in your mouth should be treated right away to keep you and your baby healthy.

Are x-rays, local anesthetics and medications safe?

Dental x-rays and local anesthetics for dental treatment can be safely provided during pregnancy. If x-rays are required, the lead apron

used at the dental office will protect you and your baby.

You may require certain drugs for dental treatment, so it is important that your dental office knows that you are pregnant. Check with your pharmacist, dentist and/or health care provider to see which medication is safe during pregnancy.

What can I do to keep my baby's teeth healthy?

Your baby's teeth are fully formed before they are born, but are not visible as the gums cover them. You can help your baby to develop strong teeth and bones by eating healthy foods during pregnancy and getting enough calcium and vitamin D. To prevent passing bacteria to your baby's mouth:

- Brush and floss your teeth every day
- Use a different spoon to test your baby's food and avoid sharing toothbrushes
- If you have chosen to use a pacifier, clean it with soap and water instead of your mouth
- Visit the dentist at least twice a year

For more information

For more information on pregnancy and dental health, speak with your dentist, your dental hygienist or contact the dental program at your local public health unit.

For more information about dental care for your baby, see [HealthLinkBC File #19 Dental Care for Your Infant and Toddler](#).