

Pregnancy and oral health

Why is oral health during pregnancy important?

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

- Hormonal changes can affect your gums, causing them to bleed and 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, such as diabetes and heart disease
- Your oral health may affect the general health of your developing baby. Research shows that periodontal disease can lead to a pre-term or low birth weight baby. These babies are at greater risk of infant mortality or experiencing developmental problems, asthma and ear infections

How can I keep my teeth and gums healthy?

Your teeth can be affected by what and how often you eat, and how long food stays on your teeth. Biofilm (plaque) forms on teeth and can contain harmful 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 gum line where plaque sticks
- Floss your teeth daily

- Drink water between meals and snacks. Avoid frequent sipping on sweet liquids 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
- For your oral health and overall health, as well as the health and safety of your baby, do not smoke or vape, drink alcohol or use cannabis
- Continue to have regular professional dental care

Nausea and vomiting can leave stomach acids in your mouth that can damage the teeth. After vomiting, rinse your mouth with a mixture of one teaspoon of baking soda and water. Do not brush your teeth for 30 minutes. You can use a 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 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. If you have pain, swelling or infection in your mouth, seek treatment right away to keep yourself and your baby healthy.

Are x-rays, local anesthetics and medications safe?

Dental x-rays and local anesthetics for dental treatment are safe during pregnancy. If you need x-rays, the lead apron used at the dental office will protect you and your baby.

You may need certain drugs for dental treatment, so it's important that your dental office knows that you are pregnant. Check with your dentist, dental hygienist or pharmacist to see which medication is safe during pregnancy.

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

Your baby has fully formed teeth before birth, but they are not visible as the gums cover them. You can help your baby develop strong teeth and bones by eating healthy foods during pregnancy and getting enough calcium and vitamin D.

To prevent bacteria passing to your baby's mouth:

- Brush and floss your teeth daily
- Use a separate spoon to test your baby's food and avoid sharing toothbrushes
- Clean pacifiers with soap and water instead of using your mouth
- Visit the dentist at least twice a year

For more information

For more information on pregnancy and oral 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, visit [HealthLinkBC File #19 Dental care for your infant and toddler](#).