

Pregnancy and Oral Care

Congratulations on this exciting and busy time of your life! You have so much to think about during pregnancy, but don't overlook your dental health.

Do I Need to Change My Daily Habits?

If you're already brushing twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between your teeth once a day, keep up the good work! If not, there's no better time to start, as poor habits during pregnancy have been associated with premature delivery, intrauterine growth restriction, gestational diabetes and preeclampsia.



How Will Pregnancy Affect My Mouth?

Although many women make it nine months with no dental discomfort, pregnancy can make some conditions worse – or create new ones.

Pregnancy Gingivitis

Your mouth can be affected by the hormonal changes you will experience during pregnancy. For example, some women develop a condition known as “pregnancy gingivitis,” an inflammation of the gums that can cause

swelling and tenderness. Your gums also may bleed a little when you brush or floss. Left untreated, gingivitis can lead to more serious forms of gum disease.

Increased Risk of Tooth Decay

Pregnant women may be more prone to cavities for a number of reasons. If you're eating more carbohydrates than usual, this can cause decay. Morning sickness can increase the amount of acid your mouth is exposed to, which can eat away at the outer covering of your tooth (enamel).

Pregnancy Tumors

In some women, overgrowths of tissue called “pregnancy tumors” appear on the gums, most often during the second trimester. It is not cancer but rather just swelling that happens most often between teeth. They may be related to excess plaque. They bleed easily and have a red, raw-looking raspberry-like appearance. They usually disappear after your baby is born.

I'm Struggling with Morning Sickness. What Should I Do?

Unfortunately, morning sickness can hit any time of the day. Vomit contains stomach acids that can eat away at your teeth, so waiting to brush after you've rinsed your mouth can help prevent those acids from doing damage. Instead of brushing, first swish and spit. You can use water, a diluted mouth rinse or a mixture of 1 cup of water and 1 tsp. of baking soda. Spit it out, and brush your teeth about 30 minutes later.



Does What I Eat Affect My Baby's Teeth?

Your baby's teeth begin to develop between the third and sixth months of pregnancy, and eating well can help them form correctly. Get plenty of nutrients – including vitamins A, C, and D, protein, calcium and phosphorous, and eat foods high in folate.

While you're at it, drink plenty of water with fluoride to keep your own teeth strong.



Are Dental Procedures and X-rays Safe During Pregnancy?

Yes, routine care is safe and important to have during pregnancy to prevent potential infection. It may be more uncomfortable to sit in a dental chair the later you are in pregnancy, so schedule dental work in your second trimester, if possible. Elective procedures should wait until after baby arrives. Yes, dental X-rays are also safe during pregnancy. Our office will avoid taking routine x-rays if your mouth is healthy. We always cover you with a protective apron that minimizes exposure to the abdomen.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding May Help Build a Better Bite

A June 2015 study from *Pediatrics* found babies exclusively breastfed for six months were 72% less likely to have crooked teeth. These babies were seen to be less likely to develop open bites, cross bites and overbites than babies who breastfed for less than six months or not at all.

Still, this doesn't mean your exclusively breastfed baby won't need braces someday. Other factors, including genetics, pacifier use, and thumb sucking, affect alignment.

Breastfeeding Reduces the Risk of Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

Another benefit of exclusive breastfeeding is a reduced risk of baby bottle tooth decay, the frequent, prolonged exposure of the baby's teeth to drinks that contain sugar. This type of tooth decay often occurs when a baby is put to bed with a bottle containing formula, milk or fruit juice. (Water is fine because the teeth won't be bathed in sugary liquids for a prolonged time.) It most often occurs in the upper front teeth, but other teeth may also be affected.

Breastfed Babies Can Still Get Cavities

It's one of the most common questions nursing mothers ask: Can breastfeeding cause cavities? Yes, it can. Although natural, breast milk, just like formula, contains sugar. That is why, breastfed or bottle fed, it's important to care for your baby's teeth from the start. A few days after birth, begin wiping your baby's gums with a clean, moist gauze pad or washcloth every day. Then, brush your babies teeth twice a day as soon as that first tooth emerges.

