

Pregnancy, Infant, and Toddler Oral Health



Oral Health During Pregnancy

Pregnancy may cause many changes to your health. Your mouth may experience changes related to your pregnancy. For example, you may experience sore gums that appear very red and swollen or that bleed with toothbrushing. This could be a condition known as pregnancy gingivitis.

Research suggests that women with poor oral health during pregnancy, including gum disease, severe dental cavities or abscesses, are at increased risk for having low birth-weight babies or premature birth. To reduce these risks, you should follow these oral health tips before and during a pregnancy.

- Schedule a yearly dental check-up with a dentist, and inform the dental staff that you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy.
- Brush your teeth twice a day with toothpaste that contains fluoride and floss at least once daily.
- Choose healthy foods in your diet such as fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, beans, dairy products, and whole grains.
- If you vomit due to morning sickness, rinse your mouth with water.
- Do not put off dental treatment if it is needed; holding off treatment may harm you and your baby.
- If you chew gum, choose one that is sugar free and which contains xylitol, as it prevents dental cavities.
- Limit between-meal snacking on sugary foods and sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, sweet tea, and Kool-aid.

Infant and Toddler Oral Health

Did you know that you can begin to prevent cavities in your baby's teeth even before they get teeth?

Follow these tips for good oral health:

- Children under age one should drink breast milk and/or formula. Formula can be prepared using fluoridated tap water.
- Starting at birth, clean baby's gums with a soft wet cloth after feedings.
- As teeth begin to appear (about 6 to 10 months), brush teeth twice daily with a soft, age-appropriate toothbrush and a "smear" (tiny amount) of toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle filled with milk, juice, or sugar-sweetened beverages (i.e. soft drinks, Kool-aid) or prop a bottle in your baby's mouth while napping.
- Never use your mouth to clean your child's pacifier or nipple, or share eating utensils. You may spread cavity-causing germs from your mouth to your child's mouth.
- Teach your child to drink from a cup when they can sit up. Avoid using a Sippy cup that contains milk, juice or sugar-sweetened beverages (i.e., soft drinks).
- Feed your child healthy foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, beans, dairy products, and whole grains.
- Schedule your child's first dental appointment no later than their first birthday.

Things to Remember

1. Visits to the dentist for dental care are safe throughout pregnancy.
2. Limit snacking on sugary foods and sugar-sweetened beverages to prevent cavities.
3. Daily toothbrushing with toothpaste that contains fluoride helps prevent cavities.

