

What expectant mothers need to know about oral health



We'll do whatever it takes and then some.

The Mouth-Body Connection

New research indicates that the health of your mouth mirrors the condition of your body as a whole. When your mouth is healthy, chances are your overall health is good, too.

If you are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant, dental experts say it is important not to overlook oral health care.

Your oral health is an important part of your overall health, and good dental hygiene habits not only help prevent oral problems during pregnancy, they also affect the health of your unborn child.

- During your pregnancy, you may experience a surge in hormones, which may cause a change in how the body reacts to the bacteria in plaque. This can increase your risk of gingivitis, a condition with symptoms of red, swollen and tender gums that are more likely to bleed.
- “Pregnancy gingivitis” frequently occurs any time between the second and eighth month. If you already have gingivitis, the condition could worsen during your pregnancy. Left untreated, gingivitis can lead to gum (periodontal) disease.
- Occasionally overgrowths of gum tissue, called “pregnancy tumors,” appear on the gums during the second trimester. Usually found between the teeth and believed to

be related to excess plaque, these growths or swellings are often surgically removed after the baby is born. If you experience pregnancy tumors, see your dentist.

If you notice any changes in your mouth during pregnancy, see your dentist.

How oral health affects your baby

Some recent research suggests a link between gum disease and pre-term, low-birth weight babies. However, other studies indicate that treatment of gum disease does not significantly alter gestational term or birth weight.

Though findings are inconclusive and further research is needed, we do know preventive dental care during pregnancy improves both oral and overall health and is safe for both mother and child.

What you can do

- Brush twice daily and floss at least once a day — these basic oral health practices will help reduce plaque buildup and keep your mouth healthy.

WE KEEP YOU SMILING®

Why do 54 million enrollees trust their smiles to Delta Dental?

- More dentists
- Simpler process
- Less out-of-pocket

Free Newsletter

Get the latest in oral health with *Dental Wire*, our bi-monthly e-mail newsletter. Sign up at: deltadentalins.com/oral_health

www.deltadentalins.com

Delta Dental includes these companies in these states:
Delta Dental of California – CA
• Delta Dental of Pennsylvania – PA & MD • Delta Dental of West Virginia – WV • Delta Dental of Delaware – DE • Delta Dental of the District of Columbia – DC • Delta Dental of New York – NY • Delta Dental Insurance Company – AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, MT, NV, TX, UT

- Have your teeth professionally cleaned. If you are pregnant or suspect you are pregnant:
 - Schedule a checkup and a cleaning in your first trimester. If your pregnancy is more advanced, call your dentist for the first available appointment.
 - Your dentist will assess your oral health and map out a dental plan for the rest of your pregnancy.
- The American Dental Association recommends avoiding routine or elective x-rays during pregnancy.
- Always call your dentist if you have any questions or concerns.

Diet, pregnancy and oral health

What you eat during your pregnancy affects the development of your unborn child – including your baby’s teeth, which begin to develop between the third and sixth month of pregnancy. It’s important to receive sufficient amounts of nutrients – especially calcium, protein, phosphorous, and vitamins A, C and D.

Calcium, pregnancy and teeth

It is a myth that calcium is lost from the mother’s teeth during pregnancy. The calcium your baby

needs is provided by your diet, not by your teeth. If dietary calcium is inadequate, however, your body will provide this mineral from your bones. An adequate intake of foods with calcium – dairy products or leafy green vegetables – or the supplements your obstetrician may recommend will help ensure that you get all the calcium you need during your pregnancy.

Between-meal snacking

When you’re eating for two, you may want to snack between meals. However, frequent snacking on foods high in sugars and starches – such as candy, cookies or potato chips – can lead to tooth decay.

Eat nutritious, well-balanced meals made up of foods from the five major food groups: breads, cereals and other grains; fruits; vegetables; meat, fish, poultry and alternatives to meat, such as beans, soy or eggs; and milk, yogurt and cheese. When you do eat between meals, make nutritious food choices, such as raw fruits, fresh vegetables or dairy products. Always follow your physician’s advice regarding diet during pregnancy.

Some information courtesy of the Academy of General Dentistry