



Pregnancy and Dental Health

Taking good care of yourself during pregnancy affects the development and dental health of your baby. Your baby's mouth and teeth begin to form during the first few weeks of pregnancy.

Taking care of your dental health

Reasons for taking care of your dental health during pregnancy include the following:

- Hormonal changes occur during pregnancy that can affect your gums. Bacteria along your gum line can cause your gums to become swollen and inflamed.
- Tooth decay is caused by bacteria in your mouth and may be passed to your child through saliva.
- Tooth decay can be affected by what you eat, how often you eat, and how long the food stays in your mouth or on your teeth. Snacking may be necessary, but eating sweet or sticky foods may increase your risk of tooth decay.
- Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy can leave stomach acids in your mouth. Clean your teeth and rinse your mouth to prevent tooth decay and damage to the surfaces of your teeth.

To keep your teeth and gums healthy, you can take these steps:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a toothpaste that contains fluoride, and clean carefully along your gum lines
- Floss daily
- Eat healthy foods
- Limit foods that are sweet or stick to your teeth
- Do not brush your teeth for 30 minutes after vomiting. The stomach acid combined with brushing may erode your tooth enamel. Rinse your mouth with water, or use a fluoride mouth rinse to freshen your mouth and protect your teeth.
- Do not smoke and drink alcohol during pregnancy.

Professional dental care

See your dentist regularly during your pregnancy. If you have healthy teeth, you will have less tooth decay or bacteria and lower the risk of passing the bacteria to your baby.

Regular dental cleanings and check-ups are safe at any time during pregnancy. Tell your dentist or dental hygienist that you are pregnant.

Any pain, swelling or infection in your mouth should be treated immediately. This can affect your health and your baby's health.

Are x-rays, local anesthetics and medications safe?

To prevent or reduce radiation exposure, postpone routine dental x-rays until after your baby is born. If x-rays are required, the lead apron used at the dental office will shield you and your baby.

Some medications may not be safe to use during pregnancy. If you need emergency dental care, certain drugs may be required. Check with your pharmacist, dentist and/or health care provider to see whether a medication is safe during pregnancy.

For More Information

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

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

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