

Pregnancy and Oral Health

Are you planning on having a baby? If so, along with your prenatal vitamins, medical check-ups, ban on alcohol and sushi, make sure you visit your dentist. Did you know it's important to have a healthy mouth before you conceive and during your pregnancy? Research indicates a link between poor oral health and preterm birth and possibly pre-eclampsia (a dangerous pregnancy complication). One study in *The Journal of the American Dental Association* found that pregnant woman with chronic gum disease were four to seven times more likely to deliver prematurely (before 37 weeks) than those with healthy gums. Women in the group with more severe periodontal disease delivered even earlier (before 32 weeks). It's not yet known precisely how gum disease influences pregnancy outcomes, but experts suspect that inflamed gums can lead to inflammation throughout the body, which in turn might produce abnormalities in the placenta or uterus.

Frequently asked Questions:

Is there a connection between my diet, pregnancy and my oral health?

What you eat during your pregnancy affects the development of your unborn child, including their teeth. Your baby's teeth begin to develop about three months into your pregnancy, so it is important that you receive sufficient amounts of nutrients, especially calcium, protein, phosphorous, and vitamins A, C & D.

Does a woman lose calcium from her teeth during pregnancy?

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. If that amount is inadequate, however, your body will provide this mineral from your bones. Make sure you take an adequate amount of calcium in your diet (dairy products and/or supplements).

Does pregnancy affect my gums?

The pregnancy gingivitis is common between the second to eight months of pregnancy which may cause red, puffy or tender gums that tend to bleed when you brush. This is due to an increase of progesterone level in your body. Consult your dentist for appropriate treatment.

What are oral pregnancy tumors?

They are overgrowths of gum tissue found between the teeth and related to excess of plaque. They're characterized by a red, raw-looking mulberry-like surface and bleed easily. They're often surgically removed after the baby is born.

What about dental work during pregnancy?

First of all, let your dentist know you are pregnant. All dental work should be done before or after pregnancy, nothing should be done during the first trimester, except for emergency work, as there is a risk of miscarriage. However if dental work is absolutely necessary, it should be done during the second trimester. Dental cleanings are recommended. X-rays (digital) should be avoided except for emergencies and medication used with or for dental work should be used cautiously as they do cross the placenta after administration. If you must use antibiotics, consult with your OB/GYN. Tetracycline antibiotics will stain the permanent teeth of your unborn child.

What can I do to keep my mouth healthy during pregnancy?

Eat an organic healthy balance diet, no processed foods; avoid all refined sugar, white flour, coffee and alcohol. Take the proper supplements and vitamins. Avoid stress, exercise (prenatal Yoga). Brush and floss your teeth twice a day with proper technique, brush your tongue and use a natural mouthwash and toothpaste. Do not bleach your teeth, have regular dental hygiene recall.

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