



Keeping Your Teeth and Gums Healthy During Pregnancy and Beyond

Why do I need to keep my teeth and gums clean?

Keeping your teeth and gums clean is an important part of staying healthy. If you do not brush and floss your teeth regularly, a sticky film called plaque builds up on your teeth. Plaque has bacteria in it that can cause gum disease and cavities (little holes in your teeth).

What is gum disease?

Gum disease is an infection in the parts of your mouth that hold your teeth in place. Gum disease is also called periodontal disease. The beginning stage of gum disease is called gingivitis. People with gingivitis have swollen and red gums that may bleed easily when they brush their teeth. If gingivitis is not treated and gum disease gets worse, you can lose teeth and bone in your mouth.

Having gum disease can cause problems in other parts of your body. You have a greater chance of having a stroke, heart problems, or a heart attack if you have gum disease. If you have diabetes and gum disease, it may be harder to control your blood sugar.

What are the signs that I might have gum disease?

It is possible to have gum disease and not have any signs. This is why it is important to have regular dental checkups. You should see a dentist as soon as possible if you have any of these signs because they could mean you have gum disease:

- Your gums bleed when you brush your teeth.
- Your gums are red, swollen, or painful.
- You have gums that have pulled away from your teeth.
- You have bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth that doesn't go away.
- Your teeth are loose or are moving apart from each other.
- The way your teeth fit together when you bite has changed.

How does pregnancy affect my gums and teeth?

Hormone changes during pregnancy can cause gingivitis. This pregnancy gingivitis usually goes away after your baby is born. Pregnant women may also be more likely to have cavities. It is important for all pregnant women to brush their teeth with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day and floss once a day.

When you vomit (throw up) from morning sickness, stomach acids get on your teeth. After you vomit, rinsing your mouth out and waiting to brush your teeth can help keep the acids from hurting your teeth. You can rinse your mouth with water or with 1 cup of water that has 1 teaspoon of baking soda mixed in it. Wait about 30 minutes after rinsing your mouth to brush your teeth.

How does gum disease affect pregnancy?

Having gum disease can affect your baby and you. Gum disease may increase the chance that your baby will be born small and/or born early. Your chance of having blood pressure problems and gestational diabetes may also be higher if you have gum disease.

Can I have dental care while I am pregnant?

Seeing your dentist is safe during pregnancy. It is also important for the health of you and your baby. Teeth cleaning, dental x-rays, and most dental treatments can all be done when you are pregnant.

- Make sure your dentist knows that you are pregnant. If medications for infection or pain are needed, your dentist can prescribe ones that are safe for you and your baby.
- Tell your dentist about any changes in your mouth, teeth, or gums you have noticed since you became pregnant.
- It is safe to have numbing medicine if you need to have a cavity filled or other dental treatment while you are pregnant.
- X-rays that are just to check on your teeth are often avoided in pregnancy. If you have a problem with your teeth or mouth, it is fine to have an x-ray. Your body should be covered with a lead apron to protect you and your baby.



How do I keep my teeth and gums healthy?

What to do	Why this helps
Brush your teeth for 2 minutes twice a day.	Regularly cleaning your teeth will prevent plaque buildup and remove bits of food left in your mouth after eating. Brushing your teeth helps prevent gum disease and cavities.
Use toothpaste with fluoride.	Fluoride helps remove plaque and strengthen your teeth.
Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.	A toothbrush with soft bristles will clean your teeth well without hurting your teeth or gums.
Get a new toothbrush every 3 to 4 months.	After a few months of use, a toothbrush won't clean your teeth as well.
Floss once a day.	Floss cleans between your teeth where your toothbrush can't reach. Flossing helps prevent plaque buildup, gum disease, and cavities.
Have your teeth cleaned and checked by a dental care provider at least once a year.	This gets rid of the plaque and bacteria that can build up on your teeth and cause disease. Your dental care provider will also look for signs of gum disease, cavities, and other problems with your teeth and gums.
Chew sugarless gum for 20 minutes after you eat a meal.	Chewing sugarless gum increases the saliva (spit) in your mouth, which helps wash away food, acids, and bacteria. This can help strengthen your teeth and prevent cavities.
Limit how much sugar you eat and drink. Drinks that have sugar in them include soda, soft drinks, fruit-flavored drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, sweet tea, and chocolate milk.	Sugar changes to acid and plaque on teeth, which can lead to gum disease and cavities.
Avoid smoking and limit how much alcohol you drink.	Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol increase the chance you will have gum disease and many other major health problems.

For More Information

American Dental Association

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en>

American Dental Association: Pregnancy

<https://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/pregnancy>

March of Dimes: Dental Health During Pregnancy

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/dental-health-during-pregnancy.aspx>

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