
Pregnancy and Oral Health

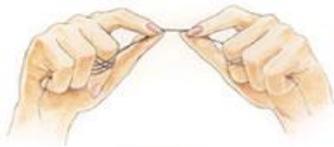
Taking good care of yourself during pregnancy affects not only your own health but also the health of your baby. Did you know:

- your baby's teeth begin to form at 5 to 6 weeks of pregnancy?
- hormonal changes can cause gums to become red and swollen?
- daily flossing and brushing, a healthy diet and regular dental visits will keep your teeth and gums healthy during and after pregnancy?
- some people believe that a tooth is lost for every pregnancy? This is **not** true.

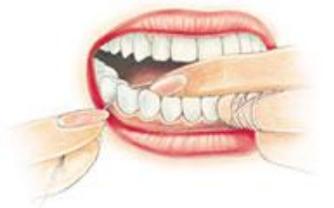
What can I do to have good oral health?

- Keep your mouth clean by:
 - flossing daily to remove plaque and food from between the teeth and under the gums
 - using a soft bristled toothbrush, brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.

How To Floss Your Teeth



Wrap floss around middle fingers (about half an arms length)



Gently guide floss between teeth



Move floss up and down, sliding under gumline, on both adjacent teeth

How To Brush Your Teeth

Angle the toothbrush bristles towards your gums. Gently brush back and forth with short, vibrating motions on all sides of your teeth.



Outside



Inside



Top of the teeth

Remember to brush your tongue.

Never share toothbrushes. This spreads disease, including germs that cause tooth decay.

If you have a strong gag reflex when brushing or are experiencing nausea, try the following:

- do the most thorough brushing at a time of day when you feel your best, not when your gag reflex is at its peak
- lean your head forward while brushing to minimize anything in the back of your throat
- choose a smaller-sized toothbrush to help reach the back molars easier without triggering your impulse to gag
- chew sugarless gum to increase the amount of saliva in your mouth which helps stop the nausea that may be common in the first three months of pregnancy.

When is the best time to visit the dentist?

Regular dental cleanings and check-ups can be done safely at any time during your pregnancy. Be sure to tell your dental professional that you are pregnant. Pain, swelling or infection in your mouth should be treated immediately, because this can affect your health and your baby's health.

Are x-rays safe?

X-rays are safe. The dental office will provide a leaded apron to shield you. This is a standard procedure for all people receiving dental x-rays. If necessary, you can postpone dental x-rays until after your baby is born.

What about diet?

The amount of food you need every day depends on your age, body size and activity level. It is important to receive sufficient amounts of calcium, protein, phosphorous and vitamins A, C and D. Remember, your baby's first teeth begin forming in the fifth to sixth week of pregnancy, so:

- eat a balanced diet. Enjoy a variety of foods from "**Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide**": grain products; vegetables and fruit; milk products; meat and alternatives
- eat regularly; three meals and two or three healthy snacks every day
- avoid constant snacking and sipping on foods and beverages with high sugar content.

What are some common dental problems during pregnancy?

Morning sickness

Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy can be caused by hormonal changes, tension and/or fatigue. This feeling usually occurs during the eighth to twelfth week of pregnancy.

Frequent vomiting can leave stomach acids in your mouth. If this acid is not cleared away quickly, it can damage the surfaces of your teeth and cause tooth decay.

A few helpful suggestions are:

- try eating unsalted crackers or dry toast as a snack before getting out of bed in the morning
- it may also help if you get out of bed slowly
- rinse your mouth with water, or use a fluoride mouth rinse after vomiting, to freshen your mouth and protect your teeth from the damaging action of stomach acids
- notify your doctor if vomiting persists or if you become concerned.

Tender or bleeding gums

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can affect the gums. The gums may become swollen and inflamed because of bacteria along the gum line. This is called **pregnancy gingivitis**. It usually appears during the third to ninth month of pregnancy.

To prevent pregnancy gingivitis, it is important to floss daily and brush your teeth twice a day. Be sure to gently brush along the gum line. If pregnancy gingivitis is left untreated, it can lead to bone loss around the roots of the teeth.

Advanced gum disease

If you have severe gum disease when pregnant it is important to see a dentist. A thorough cleaning of your teeth and gums is necessary to improve your oral health and to reduce the number of decay causing germs in your mouth. Women with severe gum disease are at higher risk of having a premature, low birth weight baby.

For more information, call the Oral Health Program at 306-655-4462, or contact us at oralhealthprogram@saskatoonhealthregion.ca.
