

Tips for Good Oral Health During Pregnancy

Below are tips for taking care of your oral health while you are pregnant. Getting oral health care, practicing good oral hygiene, eating healthy foods, and practicing other healthy behaviors will help keep you and your baby healthy. Delaying necessary treatment for dental problems could result in significant risk to you and your baby (for example, a bad tooth infection in your mouth could spread throughout your body).

Get Oral Health Care

- Taking care of your mouth while you are pregnant is important for you and your baby. Changes to your body when you are pregnant can make your gums sore or puffy and can make them bleed. This problem is called *gingivitis* (inflammation of the gums). If gingivitis is not treated, it may lead to more serious periodontal (gum) disease. This disease can lead to tooth loss.
- Oral health care, including use of X-rays, pain medication, and local anesthesia, is safe throughout pregnancy.
- Get oral health treatment, as recommended by an oral health professional, before delivery.
- If your last dental visit took place more than 6 months ago or if you have any oral health problems or concerns, schedule a dental appointment as soon as possible.



- Tell the dental office that you are pregnant and your due date. This information will help the dental team provide the best care for you.

Practice Good Oral Hygiene

- Brush your teeth with fluoridated toothpaste twice a day. Replace your toothbrush every 3 or 4 months, or more often if the bristles are frayed. Do not share your toothbrush. Clean between teeth daily with floss or an interdental cleaner.
- Rinse every night with an over-the-counter fluoridated, alcohol-free mouthrinse.
- After eating, chew xylitol-containing gum or use other xylitol-containing products, such as mints, which can help reduce bacteria that can cause tooth decay.
- If you vomit, rinse your mouth with a teaspoon of baking soda in a cup of water to stop acid from attacking your teeth.

Eat Healthy Foods

- Eat a variety of healthy foods, such as fruits; vegetables; whole-grain products like cereals, bread, or crackers; and dairy products like milk, cheese, cottage cheese, or unsweetened yogurt. Meats, fish, chicken, eggs, beans, and nuts are also good choices.
- Eat fewer foods high in sugar like candy, cookies, cake, and dried fruit, and drink fewer beverages high in sugar like juice, fruit-flavored drinks, or pop (soda).
- For snacks, choose foods low in sugar, such as fruits, vegetables, cheese, and unsweetened yogurt.
- To help choose foods low in sugar, read food labels.
- If you have problems with nausea, try eating small amounts of healthy foods throughout the day.
- Drink water or milk instead of juice, fruit-flavored drinks, or pop (soda).

- Drink water throughout the day, especially between meals and snacks. Drink fluoridated water (via a community fluoridated water source) or, if you prefer bottled water, drink water that contains fluoride.
- To reduce the risk of birth defects, get 600 micrograms of folic acid each day throughout your pregnancy. Take a dietary supplement of folic acid and eat foods high in folate and foods fortified with folic acid. Examples of these foods include
 - Asparagus, broccoli, and green leafy vegetables, such as lettuce and spinach
 - Legumes (beans, peas, lentils)
 - Papaya, tomato juice, oranges or orange juice, strawberries, cantaloupe, and bananas
 - Grain products fortified with folic acid (breads, cereals, cornmeal, flour, pasta, white rice)

Practice Other Healthy Behaviors

- Attend prenatal classes.
- Stop any use of tobacco products and recreational drugs. Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Stop any consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Resources

Cavity Keep Away (brochure and poster in English and Spanish) produced by the California Dental Association Foundation. <http://www.cdafoundation.org/Learn/EducationTraining/PerinatalOralHealthEducation/PatientEducationMaterial.aspx>.

Dental Care Before, During, and After Pregnancy (handout) produced by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Division of Oral Health. <http://www.scdhec.gov/administration/library/CR-009602.pdf>.

For the Dental Patient: Oral Health During Pregnancy—What to Expect When Expecting (handout) produced by the American Dental Association. <http://www.ada.org/993.aspx>.

Good Oral Health for Two (handout) produced by the Northeast Center for Healthy Communities, Greater Lawrence Family Health Center. http://www.mchoralhealth.org/pdfs/goodoralhealthfortwo_eng.pdf (English), http://www.mchoralhealth.org/pdfs/goodoralhealthfortwo_sp.pdf (Spanish).

Healthy Smiles for Two (brochure) produced by the South Dakota Department of Health, Oral Health Program. http://doh.sd.gov/OralHealth/PDF/SmilesforTwo_Brochure.pdf.

Nothing But the Tooth (video) produced by the Texas Department of State Health Services, Nutrition Services Section

and Texas Oral Health Coalition. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m41tR3s9sE> (English), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuYTLjXG-do> (Spanish).

Patient Education Tools (articles in Chinese, English, Hmong, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese) produced by the California Dental Association. http://www.cda.org/page/patient_education_tools.

Pregnancy and Dental Care (poster and wallet card) produced by the New York State Department of Health. <http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/dental/publications.htm>.

text4baby (mobile information service) produced by the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition. <http://www.text4baby.org>.

Two Healthy Smiles: Tips to Keep You and Your Baby Healthy (brochures) produced by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/pregnancybrochure.pdf> (English) and http://www.mchoralhealth.org/PDFs/pregnancybrochure_sp.pdf (Spanish).

Finding a Dentist

- <http://www.ada.org/ada/findadentist/advancedsearch.aspx>
- <http://www.knowyourteeth.com/findadentist>

Finding Low-Cost Dental Care

- <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/FindingDentalCare/ReducedCost/FLCDC.htm>

Finding Health Insurance Coverage

- <http://www.coverageforall.org>

After Your Baby Is Born

- Continue taking care of your mouth after your baby is born. Keep getting oral health care, practicing good oral hygiene, eating healthy foods, and practicing other healthy behaviors.
- Take care of your baby's gums and teeth, feed your baby healthy foods (exclusive breastfeeding for at least 4 months, but ideally for 6 months), and take your baby to the dentist by age 1.
- Ask your baby's pediatric health professional to check your baby's mouth (conduct an oral health risk assessment) starting at age 6 months, and to provide a referral to a dentist for urgent oral health care.

Resource

A Healthy Smile for Your Baby: Tips to Keep Your Baby Healthy (brochures in English and Spanish) produced by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center. <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/materials/consumerbrochures.html>.