

Pregnancy & Oral Health

Congratulations on the upcoming addition to your family. The next few months will be busy, but it's important not to forget about your mouth.

Firstly, it's important to continue seeing your dentist for regular check-ups and preventive care. A dental examination early in your pregnancy can help to identify any problems that may need to be fixed. Most dental treatment is safe during pregnancy, but it's best to get any treatment done early, to prevent more serious problems closer to the due date.

The best way to prevent any dental problems is good oral hygiene and diet. So brushing twice per day for 2 minutes using a toothpaste containing fluoride, and flossing to remove plaque will help to prevent tooth decay and gum disease.

Healthy eating is essential during pregnancy, but cravings for unusual foods and drinks, especially sweet, sour or spicy foods, are common during pregnancy. Frequent snacking is a particular risk factor which can lead to tooth decay and dental erosion. When you do snack, try and choose foods that are low in sugar, and good for your baby and your teeth – milk, cheese, fruit and vegetables.

Some women experience 'pregnancy gingivitis' where the gums become more sensitive and bleed during brushing and flossing. This is related to hormone changes. Good oral hygiene is important – bleeding gums are a sign to brush more, not less. Visit your dentist if you are concerned.

Morning sickness - nausea and vomiting - can lead to dental erosion. Strong flavoured tooth paste and the action of brushing may also cause gagging/vomiting. It's best to wait at least an hour after a bout of morning sickness before brushing your teeth to protect the softened tooth enamel. Rinsing with water, chewing sugar-free chewing gum or having some milk or cheese are good ways to help neutralise the acid.

It's a common myth that calcium leeches from your teeth to your baby, but we know that this isn't true.

Key Tips for Pregnant Women:

- Eat a sensible balanced diet – minimise sweet foods and drinks
- Maintain excellent oral health
- Make seeing your dentist a priority
- Drink plenty of fluoridated tap water
- If vomiting or reflux is a problem, rinse with tap water
- Seek dental care if you are concerned