

# A Parent's Guide to Dental Care for Pregnant Children

*It is very important for the health of the mother and the baby that a pregnant child to see a dentist even if she has no obvious dental problems.*

## **Pregnant girls may develop problems that can affect their teeth and gums.**

- **Swollen and bleeding gums**

This happens because of hormonal changes during pregnancy and the bacteria in the dental plaque. It is important to brush twice a day and floss at night to keep gums clean and prevent this problem from getting worse.

- **Pregnancy tumor**

Don't let the word "tumor" scare you - this is not cancer. A pregnancy tumor is a bump that looks like a red mass that some pregnant girls develop on their gums. It can bleed if it gets irritated from teeth or food. Most of these will go away after the birth of the baby but the dentist may decide to remove it if it is large or ulcerated.

- **Vomiting**

This can happen in the morning or at any time of the day. Do not brush your teeth right after throwing up. Instead, rinse the mouth with water or a baking soda rinse to wash away the acid from the mouth and teeth. You can make the baking soda rinse by mixing ¼ teaspoon of baking soda in 1 cup of warm water.

- **Unhealthy food habits**

Eating for two is an incorrect myth during pregnancy. In most cases, a pregnant patient only needs up to 300 extra calories a day. These calories should come from healthy food that does not have added sugar in it. Some patients may take gummy prenatal vitamins. Gummy vitamins are sticky and sweet and can increase the chances for getting cavities. It is important to drink water or brush the teeth after taking these vitamins.

## **Mother's Mouth and Baby's Health**

Taking care of the mouth and making sure that the pregnant patient has healthy gums is important for the health of the unborn baby. Some studies have shown that gum disease is associated with low birth weight and premature birth. Cleaning by the dentist as well as brushing and flossing everyday can help prevent gum disease.

After a baby is born, it is important not to do anything that can transfer mom's spit to the baby such as sharing food, eating utensils, blowing on a baby's food, or even kissing a baby on the lips. The bacteria in the mother's mouth can get into the baby's mouth and cause cavities. Treating cavities and gum disease before the birth of the baby can reduce the chances that bacteria from the mother will affect the child.

The dentist will also discuss with the pregnant patient about how to care for the baby's mouth after its birth and remind her to schedule the baby's dental appointment before his or her first birthday.

### **Questions to ask your child's dentist:**

- When is a good time for my child to get dental treatment while she is pregnant?

The second trimester is the safest time for dental treatment that isn't urgent in a pregnant child but dental problems should be treated as soon as possible no matter how far along her pregnancy.

- Are dental x-rays safe for my pregnant child and her baby?

Yes. Modern digital x-rays use much less radiation than traditional x-rays. The dentist will use a lead apron to shield the developing baby and focus the x-rays on the problem area when a child is pregnant.

- Can my child's teeth be numbed during pregnancy?

Yes. The numbing injection used by dentists (2% lidocaine) is safe during pregnancy.

- Which pain medication can my child take for a toothache during pregnancy?

Tylenol®. Do not give your child Motrin® during pregnancy because it can increase the chances of bleeding. It is very important to see a dentist and treat the cause of the toothache rather than just take pain medicine.

- What can the dentist do to make my child comfortable during dental visits?

Your dentist can do several things to make a pregnant patient more comfortable during a dental appointment including:

- o Keeping her head higher than her feet when she is in the dental chair
- o Placing a pillow under her right hip to keep her blood pressure normal
- o Schedule short appointments

### **How can my child prevent cavities and gum disease during pregnancy?**

- Brush teeth every morning and night.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride in it.
- Floss after brushing at night. Flossing cleans between the teeth where the bristles of a toothbrush cannot reach.
- Drink fluoridated water. The small amount of fluoride in water will not hurt a developing baby.
- Stay away from foods that have added sugar. In-between meal snacks should not be sweet treats.
- Do not drink juices, sodas, or sports drinks often.

### **Questions your child's dentist might ask you:**

- Who are the doctors your child sees and how can I get in touch with them?
- How many weeks pregnant is your child?
- Have there been any problems with the pregnancy so far?

- When was your child's last dental appointment?
- When was your child's last OBGYN appointment?
- Is your child taking prenatal vitamins? If yes, which form (tablets, gummies, chewable)?
- Does your child have any dental problems that are bothering her right now?
- Does your child have any known allergies?
- Does your child have morning sickness? Has she been throwing up?
- What does your child eat for meals and snacks? What does she drink?
- Has your child had any complications or problems when having dental work done in the past?
- Is your child afraid of the dentist?

**What should you ask your child's pediatrician OBGYN regarding dental care if your child is pregnant?**

- Does my child need any extra protection while receiving dental care?
- Is there anything the dentist should do differently for my child?

**How often should my child see the dentist?**

Most children should see the dentist every 6 months. However, if your child is at high risk for cavities, the dentist may recommend visits that are more frequent.

The baby's first dental visit should be before he/she is 12 months old.

**How to find a pediatric dentist:**

American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry: [www.aapd.org](http://www.aapd.org)

American Board of Pediatric Dentistry: [www.abpd.org](http://www.abpd.org)

Additional Information on Teenage Pregnancy:

<https://medlineplus.gov/teenagepregnancy.html>

Note: The information you see describes general oral health information for children who are pregnant, but it does not apply to everyone. This information is not medical advice. Please contact a healthcare provider if your child has a medical problem. If you think your child may have a medical emergency, please call your child's doctor or an emergency number immediately.

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