



Dental care during pregnancy

Are you worried about seeing the dentist while you're pregnant? Relax. The American Dental Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists agree that oral health care during pregnancy is safe and delaying treatment can be bad for you.¹

Pregnancy can trigger oral health problems, including gum problems and dental erosion.

GUM PROBLEMS

Hormonal changes increase the risk of gum problems during pregnancy.

Inflammation of the gums is known as gingivitis. Signs of gingivitis can include swelling and bleeding. Some extra effort in caring for your teeth may help. Take the time to

- brush twice a day for 2 minutes with a toothpaste that has fluoride;
- clean between your teeth once per day with dental floss or another interdental cleaner.

Left untreated, gingivitis can lead to periodontitis. With periodontitis, the infection goes beneath the gum line and can damage the tissues that hold your teeth in place. Without dental treatment, teeth can become loose and may even fall out or need to be pulled.

Also, some women may develop lumps on their gums during pregnancy. They don't usually hurt, but they can make it difficult to keep your teeth clean. Typically, they go away after the baby is born, but if they interfere with taking care of your teeth, your dentist may suggest removing these lumps.²

DENTAL EROSION

Dental erosion is the loss of the hard, outer layer of your teeth. It can happen when your teeth are repeatedly exposed to acid. If you are vomiting frequently, you may be at risk of developing dental erosion.

To help prevent dental erosion, rinse your mouth after vomiting with a teaspoon of baking soda dissolved in 1 cup of water. But don't brush right away! The rinse will help stop the acid from attacking your teeth, and time will allow the enamel on your teeth to harden.² You can brush after about an hour.³

OTHER THOUGHTS

You might also be wondering about radiographs (x-rays), medication use, or when it would be safest to see the dentist.

Dental radiographs are considered to be safe during pregnancy.¹ The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that a protective apron cover your throat and abdomen during radiographs.¹

Your dentist may need to use or prescribe medications as part of your care. For example, you may develop a cavity that would need to be treated. Your dentist has safe options available for local anesthetic, antibiotics, and pain relief that he or she can turn to during pregnancy.⁴

Although treatment is safe throughout pregnancy, you may be more comfortable during the second trimester. Nausea and vomiting could be a problem during the first trimester,² and during the third trimester, you may be uncomfortable when the chair is reclined because of the weight of the baby.⁵ Tell your dentist if you are uncomfortable or lightheaded during treatment, and he or she can help you change positions.

CONCLUSION

Professional groups for dentists and obstetricians agree that oral health care is safe and important during pregnancy. See your dentist regularly—even when pregnant—to help keep your mouth healthy. ■

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"For the Patient" provides general information on dental treatments. It is designed to prompt discussion between dentist and patient about treatment options and does not substitute for the dentist's professional assessment based on the individual patient's needs and desires.

You can find more information for patients at ADAcatalog.org or at MouthHealthy.org.

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