

Managing Your Oral Health During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is such an exciting time for the mother-to-be and the growing life inside her. Because of the ever-developing fetus, the mother will experience many physical changes in her body. These changes include her teeth, gums, and overall mouth. If said areas are neglected, dental problems may become worse.

Following some simple instructions will allow the mother to prevent problems and protect herself from worsening conditions. Each step will help the mother to better preserve her overall health, as she carries her little one inside.

Speak to Your Dentist

Keep the lines of communication open between you and your dentist. If you know that you intend to be pregnant within a certain period of time, speak to your doctor about it. Let her know your concerns and ask her necessary questions.

The dentist will make recommendations on how to better fortify and preserve your oral health during this period of time. She can help guide you and evaluate what necessary measures might need to be taken.

For example, if you know that you want to be pregnant within six months and have dental work pending, it may be wise to expedite that process or it may be wise to wait until after Baby is born. The dentist will know.

Before any dental work happens, if you are newly pregnant, inform your doctor about changes in medications. This too can affect your body and pregnancy. Your doctor needs to know, so that she can change treatment plans, if necessary.

Do not stop seeing the dentist because you are pregnant. If anything, pregnancy is more reason to go. Schedule those routine check-ups, inform the doctor about new medical changes, and consult before any treatment is rendered.

Keep Up Those Great Habits

During pregnancy, the goal is to take care of your body so that your baby enters the world with a healthy body. This means that you need to keep brushing your teeth at least twice a day. Floss your teeth. Rinsing with mouthwash may need to be taken up a notch to help control plaque.

Many mothers report morning sickness on a daily basis. Once or twice is no big deal, but with time, the stomach acid from the vomiting coats teeth and breaks down the enamel that protects teeth. A simple way to overcome this issue is to rinse your mouth with a mouthwash or a homemade mixture of baking soda and water. After waiting 30 minutes, go ahead and brush your teeth.

Your Gum Health

It is not uncommon for pregnant women to observe more sensitive gums during pregnancy. In fact, many report increased bleeding and tenderness between their teeth. Mothers carrying a baby have a higher chance of getting gingivitis during pregnancy. This is the name denoted to red, tender, or easily bleeding gums.

While gingivitis is not a serious condition, it can lead to more serious gum diseases if untreated. For this reason, it is of the essence that pregnant women reach out to their dental providers during their pregnancies. Sometimes it may be appropriate for a woman to receive extra professional cleanings to prevent further disease.

Now, some women have “pregnancy tumors” on their gums during pregnancy. These usually appear during the second trimester and consist of excess plaque that inflames the gums in a swollen red, shiny growth that bleeds easily. Many times, these growths go away before the baby is born. Certainly, your dentist can remove areas if necessary.

Medication

Before taking any medicines, make sure that your OBGYN is on board. This is especially important when it comes to painkillers and antibiotics, as each can affect the baby. Ask your dentist to consult with your OBGYN to ensure your baby’s safety.

Before X-Rays

Your dental provider should always ask if you are pregnant or if there is a chance you are pregnant before engaging in x-rays. Now, according to the current national guidelines, women are advised to seek out needed dental treatment before postponing it, because of the risks imposed. This includes having x-rays. This dental/medical advisement exists, because untreated dental issues can result in more serious health problems like infection, serious pain, or the inability to eat. These issues far outweigh any risk imposed by x-rays.

If you find yourself needing treatment that requires an x-ray, be advised that your doctor will absolutely do everything in her power to reduce exposure to radiation. Also, know that dental x-rays already provide minimal exposure.

Healthy Food Choices

Did you know that the foods you eat during pregnancy also affect your baby’s teeth, in addition to his physical growth?

A baby actually begins to grow his teeth during the early stages of pregnancy. This is why vitamins A, C, D, protein, calcium, and phosphorous become such important nutrients to your diet. Try to have three servings of dairy each day. Take those pre-

natal vitamins consistently, and consult with your doctor on healthy ways to get in all of your necessary vitamins and minerals.

Aftermath

Now that your baby is born, keep consistently following through on each of those habits. Brush twice a day, floss your teeth, rinse with mouthwash, and visit your dentist regularly. Baby will be watching Mommy to see how you care for yourself and seek to emulate you.

Remember to bring your baby to the dentist before his first birthday. This will ensure to get him off to a healthy start.