Pregnancy and Dental Health

Why is dental health during pregnancy important?

It is important to take care of your dental health during pregnancy for the following reasons:

- Taking good care of yourself and your dental health during pregnancy supports the development and dental health of your baby. Your baby's mouth and teeth begin to form during the first few weeks of pregnancy.

- Hormonal changes occur during pregnancy that can affect your gums. Bacteria along your gum line can cause your gums to become swollen and inflamed.

- Tooth decay is caused by bacteria in your mouth and may be passed to your child through saliva.

- Research shows there may be a link between oral disease and other health problems such as diabetes, heart disease or pre-term and low-birth-weight babies.

How can I keep my teeth and gums healthy?

Your teeth can be affected by what you eat, how often you eat, and how long the food stays in your mouth or on your teeth. To keep your teeth and gums healthy:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with toothpaste that contains fluoride.

- Clean carefully along the gum line.

- Floss your teeth every day.

- When you are thirsty drink water between meals.

- Rinse your mouth with water after snacks.

- Eat healthy foods and limit foods that are sweet or stick to your teeth.

- Do not smoke or drink alcohol during pregnancy.

Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy can leave stomach acids in your mouth. Do not brush your teeth for 30 minutes after vomiting. The stomach acid combined with brushing may erode your tooth enamel. Rinse your mouth with water, or use a fluoride mouth rinse to freshen your mouth and protect your teeth.

Should I see a dentist while I am pregnant?

Regular dental cleanings and check-ups are safe at any time during pregnancy. Tell your dentist or dental hygienist that you are pregnant.

If you have healthy teeth, you will have less tooth decay or bacteria and lower the risk of passing the bacteria to your baby.

Any pain, swelling or infection in your mouth should be treated right away. This can affect your health and your baby's health.

Are x-rays, local anesthetics and medications safe?

Dental x-rays and local anesthetics for dental treatment can be safely provided during pregnancy. If x-rays are required, the lead apron used at the dental office will shield you and your baby.

Some medications may not be safe to use during pregnancy. If you need emergency dental care, certain drugs may be required. Check with your pharmacist, dentist and/or health care provider to see whether a medication is safe during pregnancy.

For More Information

For more information on pregnancy and dental health, please contact your dentist, your dental hygienist, or the dental program at your local public health unit.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.