



# Oral Health Tips

## Dental Visits While You Are Pregnant

Dental experts recommend visiting a dentist for a checkup if you are planning to become pregnant or as soon as you find out you are pregnant. Your dentist can assess your oral health and determine how frequently you need to be seen during your pregnancy in order to maintain optimal oral health. Some dental experts recommend limiting the first trimester of pregnancy to emergency dental treatment only. If you need non-emergency dental procedures, this is not recommended until during or after the second trimester. Be sure to tell your dentist if you are pregnant, so that your dentist is aware of your pregnancy before providing treatment or using any medications or x-rays.

### Good Nutrition Is Important for Mother and Baby

Maintaining good nutrition during pregnancy is important for the health of both mother and baby. Your baby's teeth begin to develop during the second trimester of pregnancy. Be sure to get plenty of nutrients (calcium, protein, phosphorous, Vitamins A, C and D) from foods and prenatal vitamins that your physician may recommend.

### Calcium and Your Teeth

The calcium your baby needs is provided by what you eat, not by your teeth. It is a myth that calcium from your teeth will be lost during pregnancy. If you do not take in enough calcium, your body will use calcium stored in your bones — not from your teeth — to help your baby grow, so be sure to eat a healthy and nutritious diet.

### Dental Health Habits

To prevent *oral health problems*, good dental habits are important during pregnancy.

1. Visit your dentist for a checkup if you are planning to become pregnant or as soon as you find out you are pregnant. Be sure to tell your dentist if you are pregnant, so that your dentist is aware of your pregnancy before providing treatment or using any medications or x-rays.
2. Be aware of your oral health. See your dentist at the first sign of trouble, such as swollen gums.
3. Tell your dentist about changes in your medical history and about any medications you are taking, and talk to your dentist or physician if you are having oral or general health problems.
4. Use a fluoride toothpaste and drink fluoridated water.
5. Practice good oral hygiene by brushing and flossing daily.
6. Have healthy nutrition; eat a balanced diet and limit in-between meal snacks of high sugar-containing foods. Drink water instead of soda or sugary drinks.
7. Do not use tobacco products in any form.

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### **After Your Baby Arrives**

Did you know that babies who nap or sleep at night with a bottle containing anything but plain water can develop baby bottle tooth decay? This happens when sugary liquids pool around an infant's or toddler's teeth and gums for long periods. Even liquids that are good for the baby, such as milk, formula, breast milk and fruit juices contain natural sugars that can promote decay. Resist the temptation to allow your baby to fall asleep with a bottle containing a sweet or sugary liquid.

### **Caring for Your Baby's Teeth**

Starting at birth, clean your baby's gums with a damp, soft cloth or gauze pad after each feeding. Begin brushing your baby's teeth with a small soft toothbrush as soon as the first tooth erupts, usually around six months. Continue cleaning gums in the

toothless areas. Your child should have their first visit to the dentist around the time of their first birthday.

Pregnancy is a great time to renew and establish or re-establish good oral health habits. Your oral health does matter during your pregnancy — not only to you but also to your baby. Choose to make a healthy difference in your life and that of your baby by taking care of your oral health during pregnancy.

**Sources:** American Dental Association at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org); Academy of General Dentistry at [www.agd.org](http://www.agd.org); American Academy of Periodontology, [www.perio.org](http://www.perio.org)

For more oral health information,  
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[www.deltadentalnc.org](http://www.deltadentalnc.org)