



ORAL HEALTH FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

Pregnancy is always a very busy and exciting time. While many expectant mothers find themselves making several visits to the doctor for care, they often times forget about the importance of dental care. Pregnancy is an important time to focus on your overall health.

Many changes can occur orally during pregnancy. The main cause of these changes is usually a sudden change in hormones.

PREGNANCY GINGIVITIS

There are many hormonal changes that occur during pregnancy. The bacteria that exist within plaque if left on the teeth and around the gum line can cause an inflammatory response that leads to swollen, bleeding gums. If left untreated, gingivitis can progress into periodontal disease.

PERIODONTAL DISEASE

Periodontal disease, also known as gum disease, is an infection of the gums, bone, and surrounding connective tissues. Periodontal disease can lead to bone loss, mobility

of teeth, and ultimately tooth loss. The body reacts to this infection by producing prostaglandins. As these prostaglandins increase, they can stimulate the body, inducing labor and other adverse pregnancy outcomes. Studies have shown that periodontal pathogens may reach the placenta during pregnancy.

PREGNANCY TUMORS

These red, raspberry looking growths that appear along the gum line are usually related to excess bacterial plaque. They are benign growths (non-cancerous), and will usually resolve themselves after pregnancy. In some cases, they may require surgical removal.

INCREASED RISK OF TOOTH DECAY

During pregnancy, frequent snacking on carbohydrates and the increased acid attacks on the teeth from vomiting can lead to break-down of the enamel. The bacteria in plaque feed off of carbohydrates (sugars) thus producing acid as a bi-product. Stomach acid from frequent vomiting weakens tooth enamel and can lead to an increased risk for cavities.



MORNING SICKNESS

Morning sickness and frequent vomiting exposes the teeth to stomach acid. Maintaining your oral hygiene can be difficult due to an increased gag reflex.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY MOUTH

Try brushing without toothpaste or just a smear on your toothbrush.

Rinse your mouth with water or a fluoride rinse after bouts of vomiting.

Avoid brushing right after vomiting when enamel is weakest, instead rinse with water.

Wait at least one hour to brush after vomiting using a soft toothbrush.

Aim for snacks that are low in sugar and acidity. Try high protein snacks like cheese.

Always drink plenty of optimally fluoridated tap or bottled water.

Chew Xylitol gum which helps control the ratio of decay causing bacteria and increases saliva flow.

Choose alcohol free mouth rinses like chlorhexidine to reduce the number of bacteria.

Swish with 1tsp. baking soda in 8oz. of water to help neutralize the pH after vomiting.

DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR BABY'S TEETH

During the second trimester tiny tooth buds begin to form as your baby develops. During this time, it is important to make sure that you have a diet high in healthy, nutrient rich foods containing vitamin A, C, D, Protein, Calcium, and Phosphorus. What you eat has an impact on your baby's teeth as early as six weeks.

ARE THERE DENTAL PROCEDURES THAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED DURING PREGNANCY?

Always be sure to inform your dentist you are pregnant.

Routine dental care like cleanings and exams are safe during pregnancy.

Most non-emergency procedures are safe during the second trimester. Your OB should be consulted when emergency treatment requires the use of anesthesia or when medications need to be prescribed.

In most cases routine x-rays can be avoided until after delivery.

In a dental emergency a single x-ray can be taken with a lead shield and thyroid collar.

Don't skip your dental appointment during pregnancy. Now is the most important time for dental and overall health.

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