



ORAL HEALTH DURING PREGNANCY

Why is oral health so important in pregnancy?

Dental or oral health is the health of your teeth and gums that is an important part of your prenatal care. It is important to know that during pregnancy you can increase the risk of having oral health problems and these can affect your pregnancy. According to studies, they indicate that there is a relationship between gum disease and premature birth, which occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy. It is important to remember that premature babies may have problems at birth or later as it develops.

Does pregnancy affect your dental health? Yes.

- During pregnancy, the levels of hormones such as progesterone and estrogen increase. So, these can increase your risk of certain oral health problems.
- Eating habits may change and you may eat unhealthy foods that can affect your oral health.
- Not brushing your teeth and flossing can lead to sensitive gums. It usually happens that some women may have nausea when they brush or floss.

Important: The above-mentioned changes may increase your risk of some of the dental problems during pregnancy.

1. **Cavities (or destruction of enamel)** - during pregnancy and after birth, you can spread the bacteria that causes tooth decay to your baby. That can cause problems for your baby's teeth later in life.
2. **Gingivitis**- if left untreated, it can lead to the most serious gum disease. It should be mentioned that pregnancy hormones may increase your risk of gingivitis and it is estimated that 70% of pregnant women have gingivitis. Among the symptoms are:
 - Redness and swelling
 - Bleeding gums, even if you brush your teeth gently
 - Gum sensitivity
 - Shiny gums
3. **Loose teeth** - high levels of hormones during pregnancy can temporarily loosen the tissues and bones that hold the teeth in place.
4. **Periodontal disease or gum disease** - this occurs when gingivitis is not treated, which can cause serious gum infection and bone problems that support the teeth. Teeth can loosen and may need to be removed. This condition is important to treat, because it leads to bacteremia (bacteria in the bloodstream).
5. **Pregnancy tumors** - are bumps, which are not cancer and form in the gums, usually between the teeth. Pregnancy tumors have the reddish appearance, of live meat, and bleed easily. It may arise from having too much plaque (sticky material that contains bacteria and forms in the teeth). These tumors usually disappear alone after delivery.
6. **Erosion of teeth** - having morning sickness, teeth are exposed to high levels of stomach acid. That acid can damage tooth enamel.

Symptoms of having dental problems during pregnancy

It is important to know that, if you have any of these signs or symptoms, you should visit your dentist as soon as possible; for your health and that of your baby. Some of them are:

- ⚠️ Bad breath
- ⚠️ Loose teeth
- ⚠️ Mouth sores or gum lumps
- ⚠️ New spaces between teeth
- ⚠️ Gum retraction (when the gums separate from the teeth and the roots of the teeth can be seen) or pus along the edge of the gum.
- ⚠️ Red, inflamed, sensitive or bright gums; gums that bleed easily.
- ⚠️ Tooth pain or other pain

Can dental problems be prevented during pregnancy?

Yes. It is important to remember that you should have your regular checkups (twice a year or every 6 months) before and during pregnancy. Your dentist should be aware of the medications you are taking, if you have a high-risk pregnancy and especially if you have any disease with your oral health.

How to prevent dental problems?

Brush your teeth twice a day and floss daily

If you can't brush your teeth because of vomiting, you can use mouthwash

Visit your dentist to have your regular checkup

Eat healthy foods and limit sweets

References: <https://nacersano.marchofdimers.org/embarazo/la-salud-dental-durante-el-embarazo.aspx>
<https://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/spanish/diabetes-gestational.html>



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