



The Tooth Fairy Times



Public Health Information from The Dental Health Program | Division of Maternal and Child Health | Prince George's County Health Department

Oral Health And Pregnancy: Get The Connection

If you are pregnant or are thinking about becoming pregnant, now is the time to be especially careful about all aspects of health.

Good oral health and nutrition are particularly important during pregnancy. Research studies have shown a possible connection between oral health and pregnancy outcomes. Keeping your teeth and gums healthy during pregnancy has many benefits for you and your baby.

Pregnancy Can Affect Your Oral Health

Changes in your body during pregnancy can affect the health of your teeth and gums.

- Changes in your hormone levels can make your gums puffy, red, and sore if you do not brush and floss every day. This problem is called gingivitis.
- If gingivitis is not treated, it may lead to periodontal disease. Periodontal disease damages the bone and connective tissue that support the teeth, which could lead to tooth loss.
- Morning sickness can leave stomach acids in your mouth. These acids can damage the surface of the teeth and promote tooth decay (cavities).

Tips to Save Your Smile



Take Good Care Of Your Mouth... The risk of having a premature or low-birth weight baby may be reduced if you have healthy gums and teeth. Follow these tips to maintain a healthy smile:

- **Keep your mouth clean. Brush twice a day with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste with fluoride.**
- **Floss daily to remove food and plaque from between teeth and gums.**
- **If you are unable to brush your teeth because you feel sick, rinse your mouth with water or a fluoridated mouth rinse.**
- **If you experience morning sickness, rinse your mouth with water or a fluoride mouth rinse. Rinsing helps protect your teeth from damaging stomach acids.**

Eat a Variety Of Healthy Foods... Eating a variety of nutritious foods can be beneficial for mom and baby. Foods that are rich in calcium are especially good for your baby's developing teeth. To prevent cavities, limit the amount of sugary foods and follow these tips:

- **Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains products like bread or crackers, and dairy products like milk, yogurt, or cheese. Lean meats, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, and nuts are also good choices.**
- **Drink water or low-fat milk instead of fruit juices, sport drinks, or soda.**
- **Limit the amount of sweets like cake, cookies, candy, and sugary drinks.**
- **Look for products that are sugar-free or contain xylitol. Chewing gum or mints with xylitol can help reduce bacteria that can cause tooth decay and gingivitis.**

Make A Dental Appointment... It is safe to have dental care when you are pregnant. As soon as you believe that you are pregnant, make an appointment for a dental checkup. Your dentist can evaluate the health of your mouth and provide any necessary dental treatment. Remember the following prior to your visit:

- **Tell your dentist that you are pregnant and your due date.**
- **If your gums bleed while brushing or are sore, puffy and red, tell your dentist or dental hygienist.**
- **Let your dentist know what medications you are taking and if your physician has given you any specific medical advice.**
- **To prevent cavities, your dental team may recommend rinses with fluoride or chewing gum with xylitol.**
- **Talk to your physician if you need help getting dental care or making an appointment.**

Practice Good Oral Hygiene... The changes in your body during pregnancy can make you more susceptible to gum disease if you do not brush and floss every day. Take the necessary steps to protect your smile. Keep your mouth clean, eat healthy foods, and get regular dental care. Good oral hygiene will help make you and your baby healthy. Your child's first dental visit should be at age one or when their teeth first erupt, to jumpstart a lifetime of healthy teeth.