

YOUR Oral Health & Pregnancy

Having good oral health is essential to maintaining a beautiful smile, and pain-free teeth and gums. It impacts your unborn baby, too.



If you're pregnant, you're probably taking vitamins, eating a healthy diet, getting

plenty of exercise, and seeing your doctor regularly to ensure your baby's health.

Are you taking your oral health just as seriously? You should. Pregnant women are often at risk for pregnancy gingivitis, a form of periodontal (gum) disease linked to low birth-weight and premature babies.

Your increased risk for gum disease comes from changes in your hormone levels that increase the blood flow to gum tissue. As a result, your gums may become more sensitive and vulnerable to irritation and swelling. At the same time, your body's normal response to the bacteria that cause gum infections is decreased.

Gingivitis can start during the second or third month of



pregnancy, and can become more serious through the eighth month.

Pregnant women may also be at a greater risk for cavities due to changes in their eating habits. Sweets, soft drinks, and other non-nutritious foods can lead to tooth decay. Bacteria in the mouth can mix with the sugars in these foods to produce acids that attack the teeth.

Your Best Defense

Your dentist may want to see you more frequently while you're pregnant to prevent gum problems.

Brushing after meals and limiting your snacking also can help reduce these oral health risks. So will daily flossing.

Removing food debris from your teeth (and from between your teeth) ensures that sugar and acids don't wear down your tooth enamel, which can lead to tooth decay.

Don't forget to brush your tongue and inside your cheeks. Both have pores where bacteria hide.

A nutritious diet is great good for your oral and overall health. Drinking water throughout the day helps rinse the mouth and neutralize any harsh acids left over from some foods.

Inform your dentist immediately if you're experiencing red, swollen or tender gums; bleeding while brushing or flossing; gums that pull away from the teeth;

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loose or separating teeth; red, white or swollen areas in any part of your mouth; or persistent bad breath. They could be signs of gum disease or other problems.

Advise your dentist about any chronic medical conditions you're experiencing, or if you're diabetic, or if there has been any change in your overall health. Your dentist can help you manage oral conditions that may result from your medical condition.

Your smile—and your baby's—could depend on it. 🦷

Did you know?

A mother's oral health status is a strong predictor of her children's oral health.



- **Nearly 60 to 75% of pregnant women have gingivitis**, an early stage of periodontal disease that occurs when the gums become red and swollen from inflammation that may be aggravated by changing hormones during pregnancy.
- If gingivitis is not treated, **the bone that supports the teeth can be lost**, and the gums can become infected. Teeth with little bone support can become loose and may eventually have to be extracted.
- **Periodontitis has also been associated with poor pregnancy outcomes**, including preterm birth and low birth weight.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov)

FYI: More information can be found online at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center (uccitdp.com), the Academy of General Dentistry (agd.org), the American Dental Association (ada.org), and the CDC (cdc.gov).

Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



• Fluoride & Your Oral Health

• Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs

• Your Oral Health & Heart Disease

• Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants

• Oral Health: Infant to Teen

• Preventive Oral Care for Everyone

• Your Oral Health & Lupus

• Your Oral Health & Rheumatoid Arthritis

• Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness

• Your Oral Health & Diabetes

• Your Oral Health & Oral Cancer

• Your Oral Health & Pregnancy

Download fact sheets from the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center: uccitdp.com