

A healthy mouth is part of a healthy pregnancy

There is nothing more precious than bringing a new life into the world. Teeth are not the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of pregnancy and the health of the soon-to-be mother and newborn child. However, dental care is an important part of a healthy pregnancy.

Yes, it is safe to visit your dentist during your pregnancy for routine cleanings and check-ups. It is important to let the dental office know you are pregnant so they can adjust your appointment and treatment plan to accommodate you and your baby. Healthy teeth and gums means less harmful bacteria to pass onto your baby. If you have tooth pain or an infection, be sure to see your dentist. Bacteria that cause gum disease have been linked to pre-term births and low birth weight babies.

What you eat during pregnancy helps keep you healthy and contributes to the growth and development of your baby. Vitamins and minerals found in healthy foods are important for normal tooth formation which starts as early as five weeks. You may need to eat frequently during your pregnancy. Snack on healthy foods like fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products, grains and meats rather than sweet or sticky foods that can increase your risk for tooth decay. Remember to cut down on sugar in tea and coffee and limit sugary drinks to mealtimes.

Many pregnant women say they feel so ill that they don't feel like eating, especially in the morning. Morning sickness does happen and it not only affects your desire to eat, it can also affect your teeth as well. If you throw up often, your stomach acids can break down your tooth enamel. After throwing up the first thing you might want to do is reach for your toothbrush, but don't! It is best to wait 30 minutes before brushing your teeth. Instead, rinse your mouth with water first, then rinse again with a fluoride mouth wash. The fluoride helps to re-mineralize your enamel.

Cleaning your teeth daily is important. Hormones may cause your gums to swell and bleed more than they used to. Keep up with your daily routine of brushing twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and flossing once a day. You may want to rinse with salt water. If your gums should get very sore and you do not want to brush, you should see your dentist or dental hygienist.

Check out this health file for more information on oral health during pregnancy.
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/pdf/hfile38b.pdf>

Author: Carol Gulliford is a registered dental hygienist with Interior Health.

Date: April 2, 2013