

# Keep smiling

## What expectant mums should know about dental health

Dental health is an important part of expectant mothers' wellbeing, and it may even impact on junior's future oral health. If you're planning on getting pregnant, it's best to inform your dentist, so that a full assessment of your teeth can be done and treatment administered if necessary. Orthopantomogram (dental) X-rays can also be taken before pregnancy as this serves as a useful reference point if there are any dental treatments needed.

### IS IT SAFE TO VISIT THE DENTIST IF YOU'RE EXPECTING?

Visiting the dentist is safe as long as some special guidelines are adhered to. Prior to the visit, inform the dentist of the pregnancy and any known symptoms so that they can proceed safely.

### IF YOU'RE PREGNANT, WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO VISIT THE DENTIST?

Unless there is an emergency, the second trimester is the most ideal time for a preventive dental cleaning and for the dentist to fill any cavities if necessary. In the second trimester, organogenesis (the baby's formation) is complete, and you are probably no longer experiencing morning sickness and bodily discomfort. Compared to the third trimester, the stomach is not as heavy, and it will be comfortable enough to sit in the dentist's chair for extended periods.

### WHAT CAUSES SORE AND BLEEDING GUMS DURING PREGNANCY?

Pregnancy gingivitis occurs as a result of hormonal changes during pregnancy, from around week 15 onwards. Symptoms

include inflamed gums, which increases the likelihood of swelling, bleeding and tenderness. Swelling gums may be more vulnerable to the accumulation of bacteria and plaque. Tenderness can also lead to poor brushing habits, resulting in tooth decay and gum disease or periodontitis (inflammation). Some research has shown that periodontitis during pregnancy increases the risk of having a premature or low-birthweight baby and may even be linked to miscarriages.

Occasionally, some women notice a berry-like bump on the gums between the teeth. These are most likely harmless pregnancy epulis (swelling) or pyogenic granuloma (lesion that appears as tissue overgrowth), and will usually disappear in a few months. However, expectant mums can seek professional help if it gets in the way of their dental care routine.

## DON'T LET PREGNANCY DISRUPT YOUR ORAL HEALTH ROUTINE

- Pick a blander-tasting toothpaste if brushing causes nausea
- If you vomit, rinse first and wait one hour before brushing
- Brush and floss twice a day
- Use a mouth rinse that tastes pleasant to you
- Ensure a high intake of vitamin C and calcium
- Consume fruits such as apples that have a cleansing and refreshing effect on the teeth and mouth
- Choose cheese and nuts as substitutes for any sugary food cravings
- Ensure both parents-to-be are checked by a dentist that their teeth are decay-free

### Tips for your next dental visit

- Tuck a pillow under the knees while on the dentist's chair
- Bring your headphones and play your favourite music during the checkup



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