

ONLINE RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS, DAY OR NIGHT!

Aetna gives you the tools you need to manage your dental care and access the dental health information that matters most to you — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Visit www.aetna.com to take advantage of these valuable online resources.

DENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION WEBSITE

Simple Steps To Better Dental Health[®], our Aetna IntelliHealth[®] dental site, is a premier dental health information resource provided in association with Columbia University's School of Dental and Oral Surgery. The site includes information on more than 55 dental conditions and treatments, an "Ask the Dentist" feature, and much more. To visit the dental site from www.aetna.com:

- Go to Members and Consumers
- Click on Health Information
- Click on Dental Health
- Link to Simple Steps To Better Dental Health (www.simplestepsdental.com)

AETNA NAVIGATOR™ WEBSITE

Aetna Navigator, our easy-to-use website, allows members to perform a variety of self-service functions. Members can change their primary care dentist, request ID cards, send e-mail inquiries to Member Services and access electronic Explanation of Benefits (EOB) quickly and easily.

DOCFIND® ONLINE PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Find a local general dentist or specialist for you and your family. Visit DocFind, which is updated three times per week. We'll even provide you with directions from Maps On Us[®].

You can search for a dentist by name, specialty, zip code, miles willing to travel, city and state, or county and state to easily locate participating providers.

Aetna members can also contact Member Services at the toll-free number on their ID card for assistance finding a participating dentist or to request a paper directory.

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Aetna does not recommend the self-management of health problems, nor do we promote any particular form of medical/dental treatment. You should consult your health care provider for the advice and care appropriate for your specific health care needs.

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Dental Health During Pregnancy



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Did you know that pregnancy can cause changes in the mouth, gums and teeth, even in the healthiest women? That's why it's crucial to know the relationship between your dental health, your overall health and the health of your unborn baby. At Aetna, we know how important it is for you to understand these changes and what you can do to maintain good dental health. We want to share with you some useful information so you can make better-informed decisions about your health care and oral care during your pregnancy.

Periodontal (Gum) Disease and Preterm Delivery

Gum disease is a bacterial infection, which can produce toxins in the body. These toxins can trigger the release of a chemical known as prostaglandin, which has been proven to bring on labor.

Because it does not always produce symptoms, some women may not know they have gum disease. The only way to know for sure if your gums are healthy is to visit your dentist for a routine checkup during pregnancy. During this visit, your dentist will check your gums and the tissues around them that support your teeth. If it turns out that you have gum disease, early treatment is the best way to help keep it under control.

Pregnancy Gingivitis and Oral Home Care

The most common pregnancy-related change is known as pregnancy gingivitis. When you get pregnant, your body begins producing maternal hormones, which can affect your gums and make them red, swollen or inflamed. It can also make your gums more likely to bleed. The good news is that your dentist can prescribe a thorough oral home care program to help control the effects of pregnancy gingivitis. Be sure to talk to your dentist if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

Morning Sickness and Your Teeth

Morning sickness can also affect your oral health. An increased gag reflex (a feeling that you're going to throw up) can make it more difficult to brush your teeth, and if you experience morning sickness frequently, the acid from your stomach can cause the enamel on your teeth to wear off. Your dentist may prescribe a fluoride mouth rinse or gel to fight the effects of the stomach acid on your enamel.

Another result of morning sickness can be a lack of appetite, which can lead to a lack of proper nutrition. Good oral health is closely connected with your overall health, so your obstetrical care provider might prescribe a vitamin and mineral supplement.

You may also have heard that pregnancy can cause you to lose your teeth. Thankfully, this is only a myth. Pregnancy does not cause tooth loss or "soft teeth."

Dental X-Rays and Anesthesia

Dental X-rays and anesthesia are rarely dangerous to an unborn baby, even during the first trimester. Dental X-rays are among the safest, and there is no reason to avoid them if your treatment cannot wait until after the baby is born. In fact, the risk of an undetected dental problem could have a larger impact on an unborn baby than the X-ray itself. If an X-ray is going to be performed, however, be sure the dentist places a lead apron over your abdomen.

Drugs, Dental Care and Pregnancy

During pregnancy, it is best to avoid all medications that are not absolutely necessary, including herbal remedies. If you develop a dental condition that requires medication, however, be sure to let your obstetrical care provider know before starting the medication. A dental infection can be serious for both you and your baby, so the risk of taking the prescribed medication is generally smaller than the risk of not taking it and developing an infection. Each situation is different, however, and your dentist and obstetrical care provider can work together to prescribe the treatment that's best for you.

Communicate With Your Obstetrical Care Provider

It is very important that you let your obstetrical care provider know if you are planning any dental treatment, even a routine cleaning. In addition to regular and careful oral hygiene and maintaining a healthy diet, communication is key in helping you to avoid dental and other health issues relating to pregnancy.

Studies* have shown that gum disease can be related to preterm delivery (having a baby before the 37th week of pregnancy). In fact, pregnant women who have gum disease have *seven times the risk of preterm labor and delivery than women without gum disease.*

*JADA, Vol. 132, July 2001, 875-880.