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Dental health during pregnancy

Aetna Dental® Plans



Enjoy a healthy smile during pregnancy.

We want you to know®



There can be changes in your mouth during pregnancy.

Keep your smile healthy during pregnancy

Did you know that pregnancy can cause changes in your mouth, gums and teeth? Did you know research shows a possible link between your dental health, your overall health and the health of your unborn baby? As an Aetna Dental Plan member, it's important for you to understand these changes and what you can do to help stay healthy during your pregnancy.



Periodontal (Gum) disease and preterm labor

Periodontitis refers to infection of the gums and other soft tissues that support the teeth. It is caused by the build up of plaque produced by bacteria in the mouth. Overtime, if left untreated, gum disease leads to the loss of teeth. Besides being important for oral health, gum disease is also known to be associated with diseases outside of the mouth. Pregnant women with gum disease have higher rates of preterm birth compared to women without gum disease.

Gum disease is often painless. You may not even know you have it. The only way to know for sure is to visit your dentist for a checkup during pregnancy. Your dentist will check your gums and the tissues that support your teeth. You can control gum disease by getting early treatment.

Pregnancy, gingivitis and home care

When you become pregnant, your body produces maternal hormones. These hormones can affect your gums. Your gums might become red and swollen. They might also bleed. This gum infection is called pregnancy gingivitis. Talk to your dentist if you have any of the symptoms. Your dentist can give you tips on how to care for your teeth and gums at home.

Morning sickness and your teeth

Morning sickness can also affect the health of your mouth and teeth. It's hard to brush your teeth when you're feeling sick. If you get severe and prolonged morning sickness often, the acid from your stomach can cause tooth enamel to wear off. Your dentist can give you a fluoride mouth rinse or gel to help this problem.

Morning sickness can also bring a loss of appetite. If you're eating poorly, you and your baby may not get the vitamins you need. Your doctor can prescribe a vitamin and mineral supplement to help.

You may have also heard that pregnancy can cause you to lose your teeth. Thankfully, this is untrue. Pregnancy will not cause you to lose your teeth or cause your teeth to soften.

Dental X-rays and anesthesia

Dental X-rays and anesthesia are generally safe to an unborn baby — even during the first three months of pregnancy. In fact, dental X-rays are one of the safest kinds of X-rays. Get an X-ray if you have a dental problem or need dental work. It's more important to find and treat dental problems during pregnancy than to ignore them. Just make sure the dentist or hygienist puts a lead apron over your abdomen before taking pictures.

Drugs, dental care and pregnancy

Avoid all unnecessary medications — including herbal remedies — during pregnancy. But if you have a dental problem that needs medication, talk to your doctor. Dental infections can be serious for both mothers and babies. Your dentist and doctor can work together to prescribe the treatment that's best for you.

Talk to your doctor

Tell your doctor if you are planning any dental treatment. This includes routine cleanings. Keeping your doctor informed will help you avoid dental and other health issues.

It's not known how or whether gum disease actually causes preterm birth, but it has been observed that pregnant women with gum disease are about twice as likely to deliver a preterm baby than women without gum disease.¹

¹Vergnes J-N, Sixou M. Preterm low birth weight and maternal periodontal status: a meta-analysis. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. 2007;196:135.e1-135.e7.