



PREGNANCY AND ORAL HEALTH

A healthy mouth is an important part of a healthy body, especially when you are an expectant mother. During pregnancy, your body undergoes significant changes that can affect your oral health. Now more than ever, it is important to eat a well balanced diet, practise good oral hygiene habits and have regular dental exams and professional cleanings. These measures form the foundation for good oral health. Not only can they help prevent oral problems during pregnancy, but they also help determine the general and dental health of your unborn child.

PREGNANCY GINGIVITIS

Hormone changes during pregnancy can affect the gums, making them more sensitive to bacteria in plaque. This can lead to red, swollen gums that bleed easily. “Pregnancy gingivitis” often appears between the third and ninth months of pregnancy and generally ends shortly after the birth of the child. Pregnancy gingivitis should be monitored by a dentist periodically during pregnancy to prevent this form of gingivitis from progressing into more serious periodontitis.

PERSONAL ORAL HYGIENE

When you are pregnant, taking care of your teeth and gums is very important. Practising good oral hygiene habits like brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing thoroughly every day to remove harmful plaque will keep your teeth and gums healthy throughout your pregnancy. If you’re not sure that you are brushing and flossing correctly, talk to your dentist. Your dentist will show you how to properly take care of your teeth and gums.

DENTAL CARE DURING PREGNANCY

All pregnant women and women hoping to become pregnant should continue regular dental visits throughout their pregnancy. Be sure to inform your dentist if there is any change in your health or in the medications you are taking, or if your doctor has given you any particular advice. This information will help your dentist determine the best time for treatment and whether to modify your treatment plan to better suit your needs. Non-emergency treatment can generally be performed safely during pregnancy. However, you may be advised to avoid elective treatment during the first 3 months of your pregnancy.



DENTAL X-RAYS AND PREGNANCY

Dental X-rays are important tools a dentist uses to help detect tooth decay and other oral health problems. It is a good idea to avoid routine X-rays while you are pregnant. In the event of a dental emergency, an X-ray may be essential for diagnostic purposes. If this happens, your dentist will shield your abdomen with a lead apron to protect your baby from exposure to radiation. The amount of radiation produced from dental X-rays is very small and the beam is limited to a small region of the face.

HEALTHY EATING DURING PREGNANCY

A healthy diet during pregnancy is important for baby's teeth. Tooth buds for the baby teeth begin to form during the fifth and sixth weeks of pregnancy. Tooth buds for the adult teeth begin to form during the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. As such, it is important that pregnant women eat the right kinds of food and in the right amounts. To build strong teeth and bones in children, the mother needs to have enough calcium, vitamins A, C and D, as well as protein and phosphorous.

It is good for pregnant women to eat healthy snacks between meals so they can meet their daily nutritional needs. However, try to avoid soft, sweet and sticky snacks that are high in carbohydrates and sugar. And remember to clean your teeth after snacking to prevent tooth decay.

You and your dentist are partners in keeping your oral health good for life. If you take care of your teeth and gums at home and visit your dentist regularly, your smile should be problem free throughout your pregnancy.

