

PregnancyToday

Tips to Maintain Oral Health During Pregnancy

According to Oral-B, as many as 70 percent of women are affected by gingivitis, the first stage of gum disease, during their pregnancies. Gingivitis is caused by an accumulation of plaque in the mouth on the teeth and below the gum line; this can also be triggered by fluctuating hormones.

Additionally, pregnant women are at greater risk for tooth decay when sugary food cravings kick in. Refining your oral hygiene during pregnancy is one of the most important steps you can take to help yourself and your baby.

Dr. Margaret Mitchell, DDS, of Mitchell Dental Spa, a dental and spa facility located in Chicago's Water Tower Place, provides the following tips for maintaining proper oral hygiene during pregnancy:

- **Inform Your Dentist:** X-Rays can harm the baby, and medications you may be on can affect the treatment your dentist administers.
- **Clean Where the Toothbrush Doesn't:** Make sure to floss every day; toothbrushes can leave as much as 40 percent of your tooth surfaces untouched.
- **Utilize Proper Brushing Technique:** Brush twice a day for at least two minutes, using fluoride toothpaste to prevent cavities.
- **Increase Time Spent on Oral Care:** This means brushing after every meal if possible or at least rinsing your mouth out with water if a toothbrush is not available.
- **Floss:** Make flossing or the use of a Waterpik a regular part of your oral hygiene regimen.
- **Eat Well:** A well-balanced diet will not only give your unborn baby nutrients, it will help keep your teeth and gums healthy.
- **Visit Your Dentist:** Consider more frequent visits to the dentist during pregnancy, so the risk of pregnancy gingivitis can be decreased through early detection and treatment. At the very least, regular 6-month checkups during pregnancy are important.