

Getting Started

Pregnancy Through Year 1

“There were a hundred things to do to get ready for my baby. But since I knew MY oral health impacted my baby, I made it a priority.”

– Dr. Eve, dentist, Snohomish, WA

Being pregnant affects your oral health. As your body changes during pregnancy, you are more likely to get sore, puffy or red gums. Paying attention to your oral health is especially important at this time. The good news is that by taking care of your mouth during pregnancy, you are not only helping yourself, you are also helping your baby.

The Early Stages

Start motherhood with a healthy mouth

While we all have germs in our mouths, dental disease is caused by bad bacteria (germs) that can be easily transmitted from mom to infant through saliva by sharing food or utensils. Receiving dental care during pregnancy is safe and recommended. By getting your own active decay treated prior to the birth of your baby, less bacteria will be transmitted to your baby and your child will be at less risk for developing cavities. Parents who keep their own mouths healthy will help prevent problems for their child.



How do you do it?

- Brush with fluoridated toothpaste twice daily and floss every day.
- Use fluoride rinse before bedtime to help rebuild teeth.
- Chew gum with xylitol (a natural sweetener that reduces the cavity-causing germs in the mouth) four to five times a day, especially after eating.
- Limit sweet and high-carbohydrate snacks, such as soda, candy, crackers and chips. These foods feed the germs that live in the mouth and cause cavities. When you do eat these foods, brush afterwards. If brushing is not possible, rinse your mouth with water.
- Continue to get regular dental care while pregnant. This includes preventive care, along with fillings and emergency dental services as needed. Receiving dental care while pregnant is safe and recommended. Once you have a newborn baby, it will be hard to find the time to get to the dentist, so do it now.
- If you have nausea and vomiting, it is important to reduce the acid in your mouth (it can damage your teeth).
 - ~ Eat small amounts of nutritious snacks during the day.
 - ~ If you vomit, rinse your mouth. Put 1 teaspoon of baking soda in a cup of water and use this to rinse. Be sure to spit after rinsing. Do not brush right after vomiting; this can damage the surface of your teeth.

“Getting in the habit of cleaning Mason’s mouth even before he had teeth made it easier to brush his teeth as they came in.”

—Sarah, Olympia, WA

Taking Care of Baby

First steps to your baby’s oral health

You can start taking care of your baby’s oral health even before your little one’s teeth come in. Cavities can happen as soon as the first tooth pokes through, so it’s important to clean infant teeth and gums regularly.

Get started with cleaning

Before teeth begin to come in, gently clean your baby’s gums with a clean soft cloth after each feeding. This will help your baby get used to having his gums (and later teeth) cleaned. As soon as your baby’s teeth start to come in, you can begin to clean his teeth and gums with a small soft toothbrush and a smear of fluoridated toothpaste — about as big as a grain of rice.

Preventing early decay at bedtime

If you give your baby a bottle or sippy cup at nap time or bedtime, be sure it contains water only. Juice, formula, milk and breast milk can cause tooth decay.



Tips to Make Cleaning Easier

- Try placing your baby’s head in your lap to make it easier to brush. Gently stabilize your baby’s head.
- Lift or lightly press your baby’s lips away from the teeth.
- Use a small soft toothbrush. Brush every surface of your baby’s teeth. Move the brush in tiny circles. You can use a clean damp cloth instead of a brush if you and your baby prefer. Use a smear of fluoridated toothpaste — about as big as a grain of rice.

