Two Healthy Smiles

Tips to Keep You and Your Baby Healthy

Taking care of your mouth while you are pregnant is important for you and your baby. Brushing, flossing, eating healthy foods, and getting dental checkups and treatment will help make you and your baby healthy.

Changes to your body when you are pregnant can make your gums sore, puffy, and red if you do not brush and floss every day. This problem is called gingivitis ("gin-gih-vi-tis"). If gingivitis is not treated, it may lead to periodontal ("pear-ee-oh-don-tuhl") disease.

Give your baby a healthy start! Here are tips to keep you and your baby's teeth and gums healthy.

While You Are Pregnant

Brush and Floss

- To prevent or control tooth decay, brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste with fluoride ("floor-ide") twice a day.
- Floss once a day.
- If you can't brush your teeth because you feel sick, rinse your mouth with water or a mouth rinse that has fluoride.
- If you vomit, rinse your mouth with water.

Eat Healthy Foods

- Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grain products like bread or crackers, and dairy products like milk, yogurt, or cheese. Lean meats, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, and nuts are also good choices. Eat foods that have sugar at mealtimes only.
- Drink water or low-fat milk instead of fruit juice, sport drinks, or pop or soda.
- Drink water at least a few times a day, especially between meals and snacks.
- Cut down on sweets like candy, cookies, cake, and sugary drinks (like sport drinks, pop, or soda).
- Look for products (like chewing gum or mints) that are sugar-free or contain xylitol ("zy-lih-tohl").

Get Dental Care

- Get a dental checkup. It is safe to have dental care when you are pregnant. Don't put it off until after you have the baby.
- Tell the dental office staff that you're pregnant and your due date. This will help the dental team keep you comfortable.
- The dental team may recommend rinses with fluoride or chewing gum with xylitol, which can help reduce bacteria that can cause tooth decay and gingivitis.
- Talk to your doctor if you need help getting dental care or making an appointment.

After Your Baby Is Born

After your baby is born, it's important for you to keep brushing with toothpaste. You also need to floss, eat healthy foods, and get dental care. When your mouth is healthy, your baby is more likely to have a healthy mouth, too.

Care for Your Baby's Gums and Teeth

- Breastmilk is best! Breastfeed your baby for at least 6 months.
- Germs can pass from your mouth to the baby's mouth through your saliva. Use a different spoon to taste your baby's food. Clean your baby's pacifier with water. Do not use your mouth to clean it.
- Clean your baby's gums with a soft cloth after every feeding even before the first teeth come in.
- Clean your baby's gums and teeth twice a day as soon as you see the first tooth (usually around 6 to 10 months). Use a soft cloth or a toothbrush with soft bristles and a small head designed for babies.
- Do not put your baby to sleep with a bottle filled with sugary beverages, like pop or soda, formula, or juice. This can lead to tooth decay. If your baby is used to being put to sleep with a bottle, offer a bottle filled with plain water.
- Make an appointment for your baby to see a dentist by the time he or she is 1 year old.

Resources

Finding a dentist:

- http://www.aapd.org/finddentist
- http://www.ada.org/public/disclaimer.asp
- http://www.agd.org/findadentist/disclaimer.asp

Finding low-cost dental care:

- http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/FindingDentalCare/ReducedCost/FLCDC.htm

Finding health insurance coverage in your state:

- http://covertheuninsured.org/stateguides

Prepared by

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Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
Division of Community and Public Health
WIC and Nutrition Services
P.O. Box 570
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Phone: (573) 751-6204
Fax: (573) 526-1470
Web site: http://www.dhss.mo.gov/WIC

National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center
Georgetown University
Box 571272
Washington, DC 20057-1272
Phone: (202) 784-9771
Fax: (202) 784-9777
E-mail: OHRCinfo@georgetown.edu
Web site: http://www.mchoralhealth.org