

Pregnancy & oral hygiene

As you may have gathered by now, being pregnant does the strangest things to your body. It's almost as if there's someone else living inside you.

Some of the side effects can impact on your dental health. And your dental health can impact on your pregnancy.

Recent research has revealed that women with periodontal or gum disease are seven times more likely to have low birth weight pre-term babies. It is understood that bacteria from diseased gums produce an enzyme that triggers an early labour.

It is therefore crucial for expectant mothers-and potential mothers-to maintain their dental health with regular visits to the dentist and a stringent hygiene plan.

Drugs and X-rays

Because of foetal sensitivity, it is wise to avoid drugs and X-rays during pregnancy. Certain drugs, such as tetracycline antibiotics, can affect the baby's developing teeth. If it is essential that you have an X-ray, special care and protection should be taken. The safest period for dental work is the second trimester.

Gingivitis

There is an increased risk of gingivitis during pregnancy. This is caused by an excess of bacterial plaque compounded by hormonal changes. This can be prevented by meticulous flossing, brushing and rinsing, and a visit or two to Smile Dental.

Decay

Changes in your diet, due to nausea or cravings, can lead to an increase in tooth decay. Snacks that are low in sugar, salt and fat, yet high in fibre, help to prevent decay and promote general health.

Erosion of the tooth surface may occur if there is frequent vomiting of gastric acids due to nausea or "morning sickness". A low-acid diet is advised-cut down on fruit juices, sports drinks and softdrinks. After an acid attack, rather than brushing, rinse with plain water or a bicarbonate of soda solution (half a teaspoon in half a glass of water). A daily home calcium remineralisation treatment may be necessary. Smile will advise. You should avoid fluoride supplements during pregnancy.

Gagging

Gagging can sometimes occur when brushing your teeth. If so, try using a small toothbrush and very little toothpaste. Try holding your breath and closing your eyes, or inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth while you brush.

Bacteria and baby

At birth, your baby does not have decay-causing bacteria in the mouth. These are passed on, usually by the parents, through kissing, food tasting or cleaning a pacifier in their own mouths. It is essential for parents to maintain meticulous oral hygiene to reduce the transfer of these bacteria.

See also ...

- Avoiding acid erosion
- Kids & babies
- Personal dental hygiene plan