



Bright Futures

Oral Health:

Pregnancy and Postpartum

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Oral Hygiene

- Brush teeth thoroughly twice a day (after breakfast and before bed) with fluoridated toothpaste, and flossing daily. Spit out the toothpaste after brushing, but do not rinse with water. The small amount of fluoridated toothpaste that remains in the mouth helps prevent tooth decay.
- Rinse every night with an alcohol-free over-the-counter fluoridated mouthrinse.
- Use certain over-the-counter and prescription medications can decrease salivary flow and increase risk for dental caries and gingivitis.
- Visit a dentist for an examination and restoration of all active decay as soon as feasible. Hormonal changes (increases in estrogen and progesterone) that occur during pregnancy can increase a woman's risk for developing gingivitis. With gingivitis, the gums become inflamed, swollen, and sensitive and tend to bleed.

Nutrition

- Eat healthy foods such as fruit, vegetables, grain products (especially whole grain), and dairy products (milk, cheese, cottage cheese, and unsweetened yogurt) during meals and snacks. Limit eating (grazing) in between.
- Eat foods containing sugar at mealtimes only, and limiting the amount.

- Frequent consumption of foods high in sugar, such as candy, cookies, cake, sweetened beverages (e.g., fruit drinks, soda), and fruit juice, increases the risk for tooth decay. In addition, frequent consumption of foods that easily adhere to the tooth surface, such as dried fruit, fruit roll-ups, and candy, increases the risk for tooth decay. When checking for sugar, look beyond the sugar bowl and candy dish. A variety of foods contain one or more types of sugar, and all types of sugars can promote tooth decay.
- Choose fruit rather than fruit juice. Drink fruit juice at mealtimes only, if at all.
- Avoid carbonated beverages during pregnancy and for the first 30 months of the infant's life.
- Drink fluoridated water (via a community fluoridated water source) to prevent tooth decay; for families that prefer bottled water, drink a brand in which fluoride is added at a concentration of approximately 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L (ppm) is recommended.
- Once the infant is born, avoid testing the temperature of the bottle with the mouth, sharing utensils (e.g., spoons), or orally clean a pacifier or a bottle nipple. This practice helps prevent transmission of bacteria that cause tooth decay from the parent, especially the mother, to the child via saliva.

Injury Prevention

- Wear a safety belt while riding or driving in a vehicle. If you are driving, insist that your passengers also wear safety belts.
- Wear protective gear (e.g., mouth guard, face protector, helmet) when participate in physical activities or sports that could potentially result in injuries to the mouth, such as biking or playing baseball or soccer.

- Avoid oral piercings, which can damage teeth and gums.

Substance Use

- Do not smoke cigarettes or use spit tobacco.

Source: “Bright Futures Oral Health Pocket Guide” by the National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center
<http://www.brightfutures.org/oralhealth/pdf/BFOHPocketGuide.pdf>