

- **Want to prevent your children from having cavities? Keep yourself from having the infection**
- **There are many safe xylitol and pH+ products available for expecting mothers**



### **Start preventing cavities even before your child is born!**

It's vitally important for you to take good care of your oral health while you are pregnant. This is because pregnancy causes hormonal changes that increase your risk of developing gum disease, and because your oral health can affect the health of your developing baby.

Below are some suggestions for maintaining good oral health, as well as your baby's health and safety, before, during, and after your pregnancy.

- **Before you get pregnant:** Make a dental appointment before getting pregnant (if possible). In this way, your teeth can be professionally cleaned, your gum tissue can be carefully examined, and any oral health problems identified can be treated in advance of your pregnancy.

- **While you are pregnant:** Tell your dentist (and doctor) if you know you are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant. This will help your health care providers plan for any treatments or procedures. It's always best to complete any major dental treatment prior to pregnancy. Routine dental care, on the other hand, can be received during the second trimester. As a precautionary measure, dental treatments during the first trimester and second half of the third trimester should be avoided as much as possible. These are

critical times in the baby's growth and development and it's simply wise to avoid exposing the mother to procedures that could in any way "influence" the baby's growth and development. All elective dental procedures should be postponed until after the delivery.

- Tell your dentist the names and dosages of all medications you are taking, including medications and prenatal vitamins prescribed by your doctor, as well as any specific medical advice your doctor has given you to follow. Your dentist may need to alter your dental treatment plan based on this information. Certain drugs, for example, such as tetracycline, can affect the development of your child's teeth and should not be given during the pregnancy.

- Avoid dental x-rays during pregnancy. If x-rays are essential (such as in a dental emergency), your dentist will use extreme caution to safeguard you and your baby. Advances in dentistry have made x-rays much safer today than in past decades.

- Don't skip your dental checkup appointment simply because you are pregnant and believe this appointment is not important. Now more than any other time, regular periodontal examinations are very important. Pregnancy causes hormonal changes that put you at increased risk for periodontal disease and for tender gums that bleed easily a condition called pregnancy gingivitis.

- To remove irritants, control plaque, and maintain optimum oral health, rather than fewer dental visits you may actually benefit from more frequent professional cleanings during your second trimester or early third trimester. Pay particular attention to any changes in your gums during pregnancy. If tenderness, bleeding or gum swelling occurs at any time during your pregnancy, talk to your dentist or periodontist as soon as possible.

- Follow good oral hygiene practices to prevent and/or reduce gingival problems, including brushing your teeth at least twice a day and flossing at least once a day. Use a good-quality, soft-bristled toothbrush. Use a toothpaste and brush for at least 2 minutes to remove the plaque that forms on your teeth.

- If morning sickness is keeping you from brushing your teeth, change to a bland-tasting toothpaste during your pregnancy. Ask your dentist or hygienist to recommend brands.

- Rinse your mouth out with water or a mouth rinse if you suffer from morning sickness and have bouts of frequent vomiting.

- Ask your dentist about the need for fluoride supplements. Since fluoride is found in water and almost all brands of toothpaste, fluoride supplementation may not be necessary.

- Avoid sugary snacks. Sweet cravings are common during pregnancy. However, keep in mind that the more frequently you snack, the greater the chance of developing tooth decay. Additionally, some studies have shown that the bacteria responsible for tooth decay are passed from the mother to the child. So be careful of what you eat.

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Your baby's first teeth begin to develop about three months into your pregnancy. Healthy diets containing dairy products, cheese and yogurt are a good source of these essential minerals and are good for your baby's developing teeth, gums, and bones.

- Consult with your dentist or doctor about the need for anaesthesia or other medications should a dental emergency arise. Make sure you tell all health care providers that you come into contact with that you are pregnant. This information could change their treatment plan. Dental treatments that could be considered "emergency" are those that are necessary to ease

your pain, prevent an infection, or decrease stress on you or your foetus.

- After you have had your baby: If you experienced any gum problems (including pregnancy gingivitis or a pregnancy tumour) during your pregnancy, see your dentist soon after delivery to have your entire mouth examined and your periodontal health evaluated.