

"Healthy Smiles for Mom & Me"



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can my oral health affect my pregnancy?

- A. Recent research suggests that serious gum disease can cause your baby to be born too early (premature birth) and too small. Premature birth can lead to some serious consequences for the baby like mental retardation, blindness, chronic lung disease and cerebral palsy, and is the leading cause of neonatal death (within the first month of life). Gum disease may increase the risk of premature birth up to seven times.

Q: Should I still visit my dentist when I'm pregnant?

- A. Yes. See a dentist during the second trimester or sooner. Be sure and tell your dentist you are pregnant. Delaying needed dental work could pose a risk to your baby. While it is a myth that pregnancy causes tooth loss, normal pregnancy can affect your gums causing swelling, redness or bleeding due to pregnancy hormones. It often begins in the second or third month of pregnancy and may increase in severity, so it is a good idea to have your teeth checked and cleaned. Brushing and flossing are also very important.

Q: Can I do anything to help ensure that my teeth are healthy during pregnancy?

- A. Follow these basic guidelines and those of your dentist or health care provider:
- Visit your dentist during your pregnancy by at least the second trimester.
 - Floss daily and brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
 - Drink fluoridated water if available.
 - Be sure to eat a healthy diet. Avoid sticky, sugary foods which contribute to cavities and gum disease. Also avoid sour candies and carbonated drinks.
 - Eat foods high in vitamin C and calcium to strengthen your gums, teeth and bones.
 - Chew sugarless gum with Xylitol (check label), 4 pieces per day for 10 minutes.

Q: Can my oral health affect my baby's teeth?

- A. Yes. Babies are not born with germs that cause cavities. They can become infected with these germs as soon as they get their first tooth at around 6 months of age. Germs are passed from caregivers through saliva when sharing food and eating utensils. You can:
- Reduce the amount of cavity causing germs in your own mouth by regular brushing and flossing, and getting any cavities repaired.
 - Don't share spoons or water bottles with your baby or clean a pacifier with saliva.
 - Help your family establish good oral health habits by taking care of your own teeth.

Q: How can I take care of my baby's teeth?

- A. Follow these basic guidelines and those of your dentist and health care provider:
- Put only breast milk, formula or water in your baby's bottle.
 - Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle.
 - Brush your baby's teeth morning and night with a soft brush as soon as the first tooth appears.
 - Use a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste across the brush.
 - Take your baby for a first dental check-up by age one.

For help finding a dentist contact the San Diego County Dental Society at 619-275-0244.

For help finding a dentist for your children call Children's Hospital Healthcare Referral Service at 1-800-788-9029.