

PREGNANCY



When you're pregnant, it's important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pregnant women need to eat a healthy and balanced diet, get regular exercise appropriate for each trimester, and avoid things like tobacco and alcohol.

It is also important to keep your teeth clean. During pregnancy, hormonal fluctuations can impact your response to the bacteria in dental plaque, increasing the risk and severity of periodontal (gum) disease.

Many pregnant women experience a condition called pregnancy gingivitis. This generally occurs during the second trimester, coinciding with increases in levels of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. There is also a shift in the type of bacteria to those that are associated with periodontal disease and bone loss.

The gum tissue may appear bright red and shiny, swollen, and it can bleed easily and excessively. Often, these changes are associated with inadequate oral hygiene, but they can even happen to women who practice good oral hygiene.

Changes in oral hygiene techniques and professional dental care can help improve or resolve the condition. In some cases, pregnancy gingivitis may persist until late in the pregnancy or until after delivery when hormone levels return to normal.

Recently, researchers have studied the impact of having periodontal (gum) disease during pregnancy on an unborn child. Early studies have shown a link in the number of premature births or low-birth-weight babies in women with periodontal disease. Researchers continue to explore this relationship to help find answers to reducing the number of preterm births and underweight babies.

This relationship emphasizes the importance of good oral hygiene before, during, and after pregnancy. If you are pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant, schedule an examination with your dentist to discuss your oral health. Your traditional dental hygiene regimen may not be adequate.

Along with tooth brushing, it is important to clean between your teeth and below the gumline to remove the bacteria and toxins that irritate the gums. Adding a Waterpik® Water Flosser to tooth brushing is one of the fastest and most effective ways to improve your oral health. In fact, a recent study demonstrated that the Waterpik® Water Flosser in conjunction with toothbrushing was twice as effective as string floss at reducing gum bleeding.

Developing good dental hygiene will help you during pregnancy and set the tone for establishing positive habits in your child to prevent oral disease in infancy, childhood, adolescence, and into adulthood.