



## **Pregnancy care and advice**

During pregnancy you may face many new and often uncomfortable health issues as the months tick by. But when it comes to your oral health the problems that you may face while pregnant should not be overlooked as they could cause further issues later for you or your baby.

To keep you and your mouth healthy during pregnancy here are Fourways top tips:

### **1. Bleeding gums & gum disease**

Changing hormonal levels during pregnancy mean that your body will react differently to bacteria on your teeth (plaque). This can lead to swollen and bleeding gums and even to the more serious forms of gum disease such as periodontitis and pregnancy gingivitis. There have been proven links between gum disease and adverse pregnancy outcomes; with a greater risk of pre-eclampsia, premature birth and of giving birth to an underweight child. It is therefore vital that pregnant women do not ignore any early signs of gum disease and get checked out by a dental professional straight away if they notice any symptoms.

### **2. Treating gum disease**

If you do have signs of gum disease, either periodontitis or gingivitis, you should know that it can be treated perfectly safely during pregnancy. This treatment involves a dental professional performing a deep clean under the gums to remove any bacteria, the only risks associated with this is slight soreness of the gums which you would face even if you were not pregnant.

### **3. Prevention**

Prevention is always much better than a cure when it comes to looking after your mouth, this is certainly the case when you are pregnant. A good oral health routine should involve brushing every morning and last thing at night with a fluoride toothpaste, daily interdental cleaning with floss or Tepes and regular visits to the dentist and Hygienist.

### **4. Diet**

One of the easiest changes you can make to look after your oral health is your diet. Cutting down on how often and how much sugar you consumer can dramatically reduce your risk of tooth decay and

is also beneficial to many other areas of your health. Switching to fresh fruit and vegetables is a great way to look after your oral health and also look after you and your baby.

## 5. X-rays and anaesthesia

Your dentist will usually wait until you've had the baby to complete any routine x-rays. X-rays during pregnancy do not carry risks to your unborn baby, such as miscarriage or birth defects and may need to be taken in the event of an emergency. X-rays are very low doses of radiation and during pregnancy carry a minimal risk of exposing the unborn baby to radiation.

## 6. Painkillers and antibiotics

It is generally safe for you to use common painkillers such as paracetamol (**Ibuprofen is not to be taken**) and antibiotics when you are pregnant. You should always speak to your doctor before taking any new medication while pregnant to make sure it is safe to use for you and your unborn baby.

## 7. Sickness

If you have morning sickness (nausea and vomiting), rinse your mouth with plain water after each time you are sick. This will help prevent the acid in your vomit from damaging your teeth.

Do not brush your teeth straight away as they will be softened by the acid from your stomach. Wait about an hour before brushing.

## 8. Smoking

It is well known that smoking is a leading cause of preventable illness and premature death and the principle risk factor for oral cancer. However, smoking is also a risk factor for dental conditions such as halitosis and periodontitis (gum disease). As health care professionals, we feel that it is important that we make you aware of these risks and offer help and support.

Although we do not currently have a smoking cessation service available there are many local services that will be able to give you help, advice and support should you wish to quit smoking. (Please enquire with your dentist)

Smoking in pregnancy can lead to an underweight baby and also affect your unborn baby's dental health. An underweight baby is more likely to have poor teeth because of the tooth enamel not being formed properly. It is worth remembering that the adult teeth are already growing in the jaws, below the baby teeth, when your baby is born. So some babies whose mothers smoke in pregnancy will have badly formed adult teeth.