

Healthy gums, healthy pregnancy

Looking after your teeth and gums can be a challenge when you are pregnant. However, not looking after your teeth can cause poor oral (mouth) health and may affect the health of your baby.

Why is oral health important when I am pregnant?

Poor oral health may increase your risk for having:

- pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure, protein in the urine after the 20th week of your pregnancy)
- a preterm birth (a baby born before 37 weeks)
- a low birth weight infant (less than 5½ pounds)
- poor blood sugar control

Poor oral health can also lead to gum disease. Gum disease is caused from a build up of bacteria that forms plaque on the teeth. Over time, plaque can harden into tartar that cannot be removed by brushing.

Many people do not know that they have gum disease. It is very common in adults. It is preventable.

Gum disease is also called periodontal disease.

Who is at risk for gum disease?

You are at risk for gum disease if you:

- do not brush or floss your teeth daily
- smoke
- have type 1 or type 2 diabetes
- are pregnant
- do not see a dentist twice a year
- have a poor diet

How do I know I have gum disease?

The warning signs of gum disease are:

- bleeding or sensitive gums when brushing or flossing.
- loose teeth.
- bad breath that does not go away.
- longer looking teeth. This may mean you have receding gums.

Gingivitis is the first step in gum disease. Gingivitis is when the gums are swollen and bleed easily. It is reversible. Make an appointment with your dentist if you think you have gingivitis.

Periodontitis is the second step in gum disease. The gums are swollen around the teeth all of the time. This causes the gums to shrink away from the teeth and plaque to develop below the gum line. Bone and connective tissue begin to wear away and then your teeth can become loose and fall out. Make an appointment with your dentist if you think you have periodontitis.

What can I do to prevent gum disease?

Decreasing the amount of bacteria available in your mouth will help you prevent gum disease.

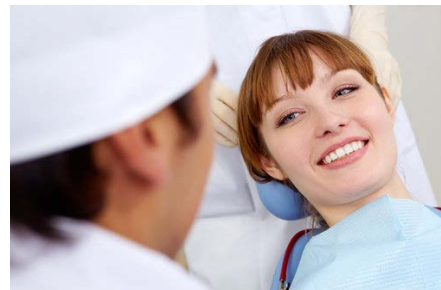
Here are some ways you can help prevent gum disease:

- floss daily – choose a floss that does not get stuck in your teeth or shreds.
- brush teeth twice daily and be sure to use a toothpaste with fluoride.
- replace your toothbrush every 3 months as bacteria builds up on your toothbrush.
- if you have diabetes, aim for good diabetes control:
 - A1C less than 7% if you are not pregnant, and
 - A1C less than 6% if you are pregnant.



Gum disease can raise your blood sugars. By keeping healthy gums and teeth, blood sugars are improved. Likewise, having high blood sugars contribute to the development of gum disease.

- stop smoking.
- see your dentist twice a year and at the start of your pregnancy.



Can I make changes to my diet to help prevent gum disease?

Yes, having a healthy diet will help prevent gum disease.

It includes:

- crunchy raw vegetables and fresh fruit
- cheese and yogurts
- limiting or avoiding drinking juice, pop and sugar sweetened sports drinks
- limiting or avoiding high sugar foods such as candy, chocolate, fruit roll ups
- if you eat sweets, include them at a meal rather than as a snack
- getting enough calcium and vitamin D every day in your diet

Taking care of your mouth, gums and teeth when you are pregnant can help to prevent health issues in your baby and can prevent permanent damage to your mouth.

I have no dental coverage. Where can I go to get dental care?

- **Community Health Bus**
This bus makes weekly stops around Hamilton and the Hamilton Mountain.
Call 905-546-2489 for the schedule.
You may also go to the City of Hamilton website, www.hamilton.ca and search for Dental Health Bus for the schedule
- **Southern Ontario Dental College**
201 Wilson Street East, Level 1
Ancaster, Ontario L9G 2B8
1-866-979-6334
www.sodentalcollege.com

Healthy smiles - healthy baby