

Dental and Oral Health of Pregnant Women

Overview:

- Many physical changes occur during pregnancy, and these changes may have an effect on oral health.
- Some of the most common oral and dental issues that may arise during pregnancy are caused by dietary and hormonal changes.
- Some of the most common oral and dental issues that may occur during pregnancy include: Gingivitis, tooth erosion, tooth decay, and benign oral pregnancy tumors.
- The dentist should be informed about the pregnancy before undergoing any dental procedures.
- Dental care is essential during pregnancy more than any other time.

Introduction:

Pregnancy is a unique time period in a woman's life that involves many physical changes that could affect oral health. At the same time, oral and dental health are the key to good health in general. For this reason, prevention, diagnosis and treatment are safe and effective practices that can improve and maintain the health of the mother and the fetus.

The consequences of neglecting dental care:

When you do not practice good dental hygiene and neglect to brush your teeth with toothpaste, it leads to the buildup of plaque on the surfaces of your teeth, which increases the bacteria responsible for cavities, tooth decay and gingivitis. Such bacteria produces acids that attack the teeth and cause cavities, chipping, or inflamed gums.



How often to replace your toothbrush:

It is recommended to change your toothbrush once every three or four months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed, to maintain their cleaning effectiveness and avoid harming the gum tissue.

Common dental problems during pregnancy:

There are several problems that are more likely to occur during pregnancy, and then return to normal following the delivery, including:

- **Gingivitis:**

This condition may occur due to hormonal changes that make gum tissue more susceptible to bacteria.

- **Tooth decay (cavities):**

Cavities and tooth decay that develop during pregnancy are not caused by the pregnancy itself but by the bacteria and bad eating habits that may arise during pregnancy. The woman's diet may change during pregnancy (such as eating more snacks), or the acidity of the mouth may increase due to vomiting, dry mouth, or poor oral hygiene caused by nausea and vomiting.

- **Tooth Erosion:**

Tooth erosion may occur as a result of vomiting and morning sickness. It is known that the first trimester of pregnancy is characterized by nausea and vomiting, which makes stomach acids damage the teeth.

- **Benign pregnancy tumors (Pyogenic granuloma):**

Pyogenic granuloma is a common benign vascular growth in the gum tissue, and it may occur due to hormonal changes in the body.



Gingivitis:

Healthy gums are pale pink in color. They are firm, fitted tightly around the teeth, and they do not bleed easily when brushing or flossing.

Gingivitis often does not cause any pain, which means that the patient may not be aware of the condition, so regular oral and dental checkups are recommended.

Symptoms of gingivitis during pregnancy:

- Swollen dark red gums
- Gums that bleed easily when you brush or floss.
- Tooth sensitivity.
- Difficulty or pain during chewing.
- Tooth loss.

Some studies have shown that a mother with gingivitis may be more prone to problems such as: Premature birth or low birth weight.

When to see a doctor:

- When facing minor oral and dental problems.
- If the gums bleed while brushing or flossing.
- If the last visit to the dentist was 6 months prior to the pregnancy.

The dentist should be informed about the pregnancy before undergoing any dental procedures. He should also be informed about any medications and vitamins taken to avoid any incompatibilities with the doctor's treatment plan.



Prevention of oral and dental problems during pregnancy:

- Dental hygiene is essential during pregnancy more than any other time; because pregnancy increases the risk of infections and inflammation in the gums.
- The dentist should be consulted if it is possible to postpone getting new fillings or to replace them with crowns till after the delivery.
- Vomiting directly exposes the teeth to stomach acids, for this reason it is important to brush the teeth immediately afterwards.
- It is recommended to rinse the mouth with a cup of water mixed with a teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate after vomiting, to reduce the acidity of the mouth.
- It is important to brush the teeth twice a day with a soft bristle brush for 2 minutes, use a fluoride toothpaste, and floss between the teeth once a day.
- It is advisable to use a mouthwash that is free from alcohol, sugars or any substance that might irritate the gums.
- The mouth should be thoroughly rinsed after eating.
- The doctor may recommend topical fluoride therapy to reduce tooth erosion.
- Treating minor dental problems should not be delayed to avoid their deterioration.
- Smoking and passive smoking should be avoided.
- It is important to chew food thoroughly to strengthen the jaw muscles, and to facilitate digestion and metabolism.
- It is important to maintain proper nutrition, **and stick to the following guidelines:**
 - Sugary foods (such as sweets) should be avoided.
 - It is advisable to choose low-sugar snacks (such as cheese, vegetables, etc.).

- The mouth should be cleaned immediately after eating especially after eating sugars, even if the sugars are from natural sources.
- It is essential to drink enough water and milk, and avoid sugar-rich juices and soft drinks.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Is It possible to undergo tooth extractions or root canal procedures during pregnancy?**

Answer: Yes, it is possible to undergo tooth extractions and root canal procedures during pregnancy if it is necessary. In general, it is advisable to do dental work during the second trimester of pregnancy.

- **Are dental radiographs and local anesthetics safe during pregnancy?**

Answer: Yes, diagnostic dental radiographs as well as local anesthetics are safe during pregnancy as long as proper medical procedures are taken.

- **Does the fetus absorb calcium from the bones and teeth of the mother?**

Answer: The fetus gets the amount of calcium it needs from the mother's food, not her teeth or bones. This is why it is important for the mother to eat calcium-rich foods. In some cases, the doctor may prescribe calcium supplements to the pregnant woman.

- **Does pregnancy cause dental problems that did not previously exist?**

Answer: If proper dental and oral care is maintained during pregnancy, then dental problems are unlikely to occur.



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Misconceptions:

- For every child the mother gives birth to, she loses a tooth.

Truth: There is no scientific evidence supporting this claim.

Clinical Health Education Department

For further questions kindly contact us via email:

Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa



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