

You and your baby's teeth during pregnancy

Information for patients, parents and carers

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net.

Introduction

This leaflet aims to provide you with some basic information about how to look after your own teeth during pregnancy and those of your unborn child.

During pregnancy and for the 12 months following the birth, dental treatment is free with your NHS dentist.

A balanced diet is important. Good nutrition from the mother is needed for baby's teeth to develop properly. Calcium is necessary for strong bones and teeth.



Healthy teeth

You may experience bleeding of the gums when you are pregnant. This can be caused by a build-up of plaque on the teeth. Hormonal changes during pregnancy can make the gums more vulnerable to plaque, resulting in inflamed and bleeding gums.

It is important to keep up a high standard of oral hygiene to avoid gum problems.

Brushing all the surfaces of your teeth thoroughly, for two minutes, last thing at night and one other time with a fluoride toothpaste, of more than 1350 ppm fluoride, will help. (You can find the level of fluoride on the tube of toothpaste. Brushing last thing at night without rinsing afterwards can help protect the teeth as fluoride in the toothpaste continues to work while you are asleep.)

'Brush last thing at night and one other time with a fluoride toothpaste'

When brushing, make sure you brush the teeth right up to the gums.

Do not wet the brush before cleaning your teeth because this dilutes the toothpaste.

You should spit out and not rinse after brushing. Leaving the fluoride toothpaste in your mouth can help strengthen teeth.

Do not share toothbrushes.

Replace the toothbrush when it shows signs of wear, or at least every three months.

Ideally, floss once a day to keep the areas between the teeth clean.

If you experience morning sickness, rinse your mouth with plain water each time after you have been sick, to prevent the acid in your vomit attacking your teeth. Do not brush your teeth immediately after being sick as this can increase the risk of acid erosion.

Dental treatment

It is very important for you to have a regular check up with your dentist. The dentist can spot tooth or gum problems early and treat them.

Make sure you inform your dentist that you are pregnant. Sometimes fillings and x-rays may be delayed till after the baby has been born.

Smoking and alcohol

Smoking and drinking alcohol can lead to an underweight baby. It can also result in a baby having teeth where the enamel does not form properly. These teeth will be more likely to decay.



Snacks and drinks

Lots of sugar in our diet comes from biscuits, cakes, sweets, chocolate, drinks and breakfast cereals.

Acid is produced by the bacteria in dental plaque when sugar is present, and causes holes to form in the teeth. It is important to try to limit the frequency of times you have sugary food or drinks.

Sugary foods and drinks between meals can damage teeth; try to keep these to mealtimes only. Even the 'no added sugar', low sugar or natural sugar drinks can still cause decay. Be careful with diet fizzy drinks as they can also dissolve the tooth's surface (erosion). Try to stick to water as much as possible between mealtimes.



'Avoid sugary food and drinks between meals'

Medicines

When you are pregnant, certain medicines can cause damage to your unborn baby's teeth. Be sure to inform your doctor and dentist if you are pregnant.

Unfortunately some medicines contain sugar, which can cause tooth decay if given frequently for long periods of time. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if a sugar-free alternative is available. If possible, take medicines at mealtimes and not last thing at night.

Visit your dentist regularly.

It is important for you and your baby to visit your dentist at least once a year. They will check your teeth and gums to make sure they are healthy.

To find a local NHS dentist, call 03330 063 300 or 01392 822348, or email accessdentalhelpline@nhs.net



Useful contact

Exeter NHS Dental Access Centre

RD&E Hospital (Heavitree)
Gladstone Road
Exeter
EX1 2ED
Tel: 01392 405700

Barnstaple NHS Dental Access Centre

Barnstaple Health Centre
Vicarage Street
Barnstaple
EX32 7BH
Tel: 01271 370562

Web: www.healthyteethdevon@nhs.uk

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website www.careopinion.org.uk.

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